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CANADA'S DAY OF GLORY

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CANADA'S DAY OF GLORY

BY

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WILLIAM BRIGGS
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PART I.

CANADA'S CROWNING YEAR

1. CIVILIAN SOLDIERS

LATE in the autumn of 1916, the four Canadian Divisions were sent, after a period of fierce, costly and successful fighting on the Somme, to the front of Vimy Ridge. The intention was for them to rest and recuperate. Their ranks were depleted. Battalions that had swung through Albert a few weeks earlier twelve hundred strong, returned under the hanging golden Virgin, counting their effectives by the score. "We came out to cheer them as they passed us," one British soldier told me, "but as we saw their thinned and shrunken lines we could not cheer. There was a lump in our throats."

On the tenth night after the Canadians arrived at Vimy, the Germans crept out of their trenches and stuck up a notice:—

"CUT OUT YOUR DAMNED ARTILLERY.
WE TOO ARE FROM THE SOMME."

Vimy Ridge had been a quiet spot for some little time before the Canadians arrived. It was quiet no longer. Yet the Canadian officers cursed

themselves afterwards and declared they had lost their opportunity. "If we had only gone over the top the first day we got here before Heinie had time to learn our little ways, we would have taken the place at once."

They had forgotten by this time that when they reached Vimy some of their formations were mere skeleton battalions. If they had remembered they would have told you that a skeleton battalion in khaki is better than a whole regiment in field grey. I would not give a fig for the soldier who did not feel this about his unit. They came with the tradition of victory behind them. Times had changed since the world dubbed them mere civilian soldiers. When the first of them reached England within a few weeks of the outbreak of the war, it is true that there were colonels who barely knew the goose step and battalions so new that officers and men only recognised each other by the numbers on their collars. With them, it may be added, were other battalions with the traditions of over a century behind them, traditions of the United Empire Loyalists, the Red River Campaign, the attempted invasion of Canada and the Boer War.

The Canadian Army was as cosmopolitan as Canada itself. Men drawn from a score and more of nations had been welded together in one great whole. One out of every three was born in England. Between a third and a half were Canadians born of British descent. Just on a

half were born in the United Kingdom. Fully ninety-five per cent. were of British birth or British descent. The Highland battalions, from the "Gay Gordons" of Victoria to the Seaforths of Nova Scotia were directly connected with the great Highland regiments of Britain. Here were English, many thousands of young fellows who had gone west to make their fortune and who had added Western enterprise to British calm, making a good fighting mixture. Here were French-Canadians, none too many of them, but splendid what there were, as Courcelette and many another fighting field had shown. Here were Russians and Finns, Icelanders and American Indians, men of German name and German descent, soldiers who had come originally from the Baltic provinces and from the Ukraine, lumber jacks and bank clerks, trappers from the north and miners from Cobalt and the West, farmers and electricians, Nova Scotian fishermen and Winnipeg brokers. Of the many Americans in the ranks I have more to say later. But already the dominating factor was becoming more and more the youngsters, Canadian born, who had volunteered from school and college and farm as soon as their age permitted. McGill and Toronto, Queen's and Alberta, universities of the East and of the West had emptied their classrooms and sprung to arms. And those of us whose business it was to study them all were glad to admit that these youngsters were making good.

The one division which landed in France in February, 1915, had grown to four. The thirty odd thousand men who had first left Canada had now become an army of three hundred and fifty thousand. There were close on one hundred thousand fighting men at the front. The corps was under the command of a British General, Sir Julian Byng, who had the confidence and respect of everyone, for he was a soldier who knew his work and was without pretence, who went straight at things and saw whatever he could for himself. He had a way of starting out with a solitary aide-de-camp afoot, over districts where it was not possible to ride, walking immense distances from point to point where fighting was heaviest. Quick to praise, quick to appreciate good work, he was the right man for the place. The Canadians, perhaps not unnaturally, desired that, as soon as possible, they should have a Canadian at the head of the Canadian Corps, but, until that could be, they wished no better commander than Sir Julian Byng.

The First Division was under Currie, who was already being spoken of by the fighting leaders of the Allies as one of the military discoveries of the war. I deal at length with Sir Arthur Currie's* career later on. The Second Division was under Sir Harry Burstall, a forthright and downright professional soldier, a man

*For convenience I use the present titles of several officers although the titles were not given at the time referred to in this chapter.

who has a way of getting things through and giving the other side the heavy end of the stick every time. Burstall is a big man, big physically, big in his ideas. Born in Quebec in 1870, he received his commission in the Royal Canadian Artillery in 1892, and later on passed through the Staff Course at the Royal Artillery College of Kingston. He saw a great deal of service, particularly in South Africa, where he won considerable distinction, first with the Canadian Contingent and then with the South African Constabulary. He was Inspector of Canadian Artillery. Promotion to divisional command came in due course. General Burstall realised from the beginning that the main duty of a commander is to see that you pay back the enemy in full measure every time, and that your guns, in particular, give him more shells and heavier shells than he gives you.

The Third Division was under Major-General Lipsett, another professional soldier. Lipsett, an Irishman, had trained in the old days many of the officers now holding high rank. When the First Division was formed he was given command of the famous Winnipeg battalion the "Little Black Devils." From the very beginning he stood out prominently among the Canadian commanders. He was tireless in his care for his men, and insisted that the officers under him should be the same. He taught by example and by precept that no officer was to think of his own comfort until he had seen that the rank

and file were housed, warmed, and fed. Ypres brought him great glory.

It is said that when young officers join the Third Division, Lipsett sends for them, has a talk with them, and in course of the talk says, "Gentlemen, there is a tradition in the Third Division that no officer in it shows, under any circumstances, any sign of fear. Should he do so, he would cease at that moment to be an officer of the Third Division." Whether this story is true or not I cannot tell, but the general certainly practises what he is said to preach. He inspires such confidence that I cannot imagine any man showing fear in his presence. To have Lipsett by your side would be enough to give the coward courage. "He never asks anyone to do a thing that he is not ready to do himself," his men say. "He never forgets a man. He knows everybody's name and all about us."

Sir David Watson, the commander of the Fourth Division, was, before the war, a newspaper proprietor and editor. Those who recall General Watson in the days immediately before the war find it difficult to realise that this quiet, cordial, Quebec newspaper man has been able to take up the work of a professional soldier and to oppose himself successfully to the ablest Prussian generals. David Watson was left as a lad an orphan in Quebec. He joined the commercial staff of the Quebec *Chronicle,* beginning at the bottom of the ladder. In a few years he became manager of the paper. When the proprietor

resolved to sell out, Watson got his friends together and raised the money to buy it. Gradually David Watson, being a shrewd and able business man, acquired supreme control. In addition to his newspaper work he was an athlete and a member of the militia. He had enlisted as a private. He gradually rose until, just before the war broke out, he was commander of his battalion.

When war began David Watson secured a number of volunteers, and went with them to Valcartier, the training camp. Here, however, his battalion was broken up, and it seemed for a time that his military career would end then and there, or that he would be put off on some minor home work. He was resolved that this should not happen, and he was so determined that the authorities gave him his chance. The Second Battalion needed some one to organise it and pull it up. Watson was allowed to try what he could do to put it on its feet. He did this so successfully that, when the First Contingent left for England a few weeks later, David Watson was its colonel.

He came right to the front at the second battle of Ypres by his masterly handling of his men and by a supreme act of personal courage. He carried in one of his wounded men for a long distance under very heavy fire. Had he not been colonel he would have received the V.C. for this. Ypres made him a marked man, and it left its mark on him. His friends say that he aged ten

years in the ten days, for he and his battalion were in the fiercest part of the fighting.

It was recognised that he had a special gift for organisation, and so we meet him in the next stages organising troops and in command of a brigade. From brigade command he was sent to England to organise the Fourth Division, and in due course received the rank of Major-General. I saw him one day forming one of a group of three on horseback inspecting his division—the King in the centre, Sir John French on the right and General Watson on the left. His division was, even then, one of which any soldier might well be proud, and, as it swept over Hinkley Common, the physique, the condition, the equipment and the bearing of the men told that they had a real general at their head.

The Fourth Division reached France in the summer of 1916, and plunged at once into the fighting at Ypres. From there it had gone down to a terribly trying experience in the mud of the Somme during the early winter. Now it had come north, with a reputation already gained, a reputation soon to acquire additional glory.

Then there was the Cavalry Brigade with General Seely in command. When Seely was first appointed to command the Cavalry Brigade many Canadians did not like it. He had been British War Minister. They regarded his appointment as political. But Seely won their hearts and their confidence by his absolute

indifference to danger. He seemed to have only one rule of conduct, and that was to go to the most dangerous point and stay there as long as he could. If one portion of a village was being shelled particularly heavily, Seely would fix his headquarters there, and, somehow, when the house was wrecked by a heavy shell, Seely was always out. His luck held good all the time. He would pause just where the "rum jars" were falling thickest to discuss more fully with his companion the prospects of the coming campaign. At first soldiers suspected that he was posing, but after a time they came to the conclusion that he was one of those men who do not understand what danger is. He was so high spirited with it all that the very soldiers who had started by criticising him learned to be proud to hail him as their leader.

The name of one of Canada's most distinguished soldiers was absent from this list. General Turner, V.C., D.S.O., the first commander of the Second Division, had been recalled to England to undertake the work of re-organising the forces there. The organisation in England had been open to a great deal of criticism. All of General Turner's associates recognised the great sacrifice he made in consenting to leave the fighting field for the heavy detailed work of the British command, for Turner was one of the most dangerous kinds of fighters, the quiet man with precise mind who smiles and sticks at it, who plans things out

and gets them carried through. General Turner won his V.C. and D.S.O. in the South African War, and made his name as a soldier there. He had done very good work in France before he was recalled to England. He commanded the Canadian Highland Brigade at the second battle of Ypres; from it he passed on to the command of the Second Division, which he retained for eighteen months. It was on his organising ability that the Army Corps at the front had to depend for its constant flow of drafts to keep up the strength of the battalions. Turner never failed them. In private life General Turner was a member of a large wholesale grocery and importing house in Quebec. Possibly it was his business training which gave him the precision, exactness and organising abilities which proved such valuable assets to Canada.

Garnet Hughes, who was training the Fifth Division in England, was, before the war, a very successful railway engineer.

Among the brigadiers we had the same mixture of professional and civilian soldiers working together in harmony. There were veterans like Macdonell, who succeeded Currie a few months later in command of the First Division. "Mac"—everyone called him "Mac," usually with an adjective in front of the diminutive—had the traditions of the army ingrained in him. He had learned his soldiering in the North-West. I first met General Macdonell one summer afternoon in the trenches in front

of Petit Vimy. Fritz was putting a barrage behind us between ourselves and our dug-out, and "Pineapples" in front. The general joked as he led the way around the barrage to our next destination.

General Macdonell believes in the old soldier-like qualities of smartness and discipline. He believes that clothes should be clean, harness should be bright and buttons should be polished. Under him they have got to be. But he maintains discipline with such good will and good temper that even those who protest most vigorously against his "cleaning up" policy love the man. He jokes about his own advancing years, but whatever his years may be he can outdo most youngsters in endurance. You have to put your best foot forward when you are going out with "Fighting Mac." One of his principles is that the tighter the corner you are in the more cheerful and confident the man at the head must appear. A true tale is told of how at one stage of the battle of the Somme he strolled into the dug-out of a battalion that was having a very hot time. A large number of the men had been killed or wounded. The troops were barely able to hold their own, and a devastating fire from the commanding enemy position was doing great harm. The colonel of the battalion, grieved at the loss of his men, was feeling melancholy, and showed it.

"How are things going?" asked the general cheerily. The colonel gave a somewhat sombre

reply. "I want you to see something out here with me," said the general to him. "Come out in the trenches, will you?" "Mac" took the colonel along to a corner of the trenches, and when there was no one near, turned half savagely to him. "Why are you looking like that? What if things are hard? Is there any need for you to make it worse by pulling a long face over it. Smile! man, smile! If you don't, I'll do something to you that will make you!" Then they returned to the dug-out.

An hour later an orderly attached to battalion headquarters asked another, "How are things going?" "Fine," said the second.

"They don't look very fine, do they?" remarked No. 1, *sotto voce.*

"To Hell with looks!" replied No. 2. "I had to go to the colonel's dug-out a few minutes ago with a message. The general was telling a funny story, and the colonel laughed fit to split his sides. They wouldn't be laughing like that if things were wrong. We're all right." And the battalion *was* all right.

Another brigadier—I knew him first as a colonel of a Nova Scotian regiment—General Hillian, had learnt his soldiering in the same school, and a very good school, too.

More than one of the brigadiers had been newspaper men. Brigadier-General E. W. E. Morrison was formerly editor of the Ottawa *Citizen,* and served in the South African War as a private. He took over command of the

Canadian artillery when General Burstall was promoted, and retained its high character for efficiency and resource. General Odlum was a Pacific Coast newspaper proprietor and editor before the war. It was he who evolved the system of trench raiding, which was standardised by the British and French Armies. He had taken up soldiering as an intellectual problem and had set himself to master the psychology of war with remarkable results, as shown in the personnel of his command. C. H. Maclean was formerly a solicitor; W. A. Griesbach a solicitor, a farmer and a politician. Griesbach, too, had served as a trooper in the South African War. J. M. Ross was once a miller. J. N. Hill was mayor of his city, raised his battalion, led it and rose to higher command. These are a few names picked out of many.

I would be the last to try to make out that the Canadians had not, in building their army out of the civilian population with a very small foundation of Dominion militia, made many mistakes. That was inevitable. But at least they were not beyond recognising their mistakes and learning from them. And they had endeavoured to select men from high posts who had some experience and aptitude for the work they were called upon to do. Thus the Quartermaster-General in England was a very successful Western business organiser, whose life's training had made him an expert in transport and supply problems—A. D. McRae. McRae

set about introducing ordinary business principles into military administration and succeeded in doing it. It was the boast of his staff that in his office every day had twenty-four hours and every dollar one hundred cents. When the Canadian railroad forces were raised, railway men were put in charge of them, and the most famous of Western railway contractors, Mr. "Jack" Stewart, came out from British Columbia first as a colonel and then as brigadier, at their head. When the British Government called on Canada to help her by raising a Forestry Corps, a practical lumberman, Mr. McDougall, of Ottawa, was given the appointment of commander. One apparent exception to this rule was when Sir Max Aitken, the financier and politician, was appointed in charge of the publicity work. But here the exception was more apparent than real, for Sir Max had a good deal of experience in newspaper work, and soon proved himself the ablest publicity man in the Allied ranks. To-day, as Lord Beaverbrook, he is head of the British Ministry of Information and a Member of the Government. Even in its "glad hand" work Canada was well served. Manley Sims—a Brigadier-General at the time of writing—was worth a brigade in himself in making friends for Canada and in seeing that Canada's guests became her permanent friends. Newspaper men and publicists, statesmen and leaders of opinion of twelve nations have sung his praises.

As the war went on the class division between officers and rank and file became less and less. It had never been particularly strong. The first officers had to be chosen in the main because of their local influence, but later on it became the rule at the front that officers were selected from men who had served in the ranks and had distinguished themselves there. In battalions known to me there were wealthy business men serving as non-commissioned officers, young professional men as corporals, and sons of leading citizens as private soldiers. It was from these that the subalterns were selected. In a war such as this, fresh junior officers were always wanted, and there was always the chance—sometimes too great a chance—of quick promotion.

2. WINTER DAYS AT VIMY

THE Canadians had been shaped and moulded by close on two years of hard fighting. They had learned the art of war on the field, and the men who doubted their discipline and knowledge at the beginning were the first to say that they had learned it well.

The move to the north was part of Haig's scheme for the coming spring campaign. The great battle which was to break the German front was to be fought between Arras and Lens, and the Canadians had been selected to capture the Ridge, standing at its highest part 475 feet high, dominating the country for many miles around. Here some of the bitterest fighting of

the early days of the war had been waged. Just beyond the Ridge, on the western side, the armies of France had held up the German invasion. In the Souchez Valley, lying between the Ridge and the great height of Notre Dame de Lorette —you could look into the German trenches from here—200,000 French and German dead were buried, and as you walked over the barren fields you could still, if you would, pick up rusted French rifles or torn German uniforms. The country on the west side rose in a gentle slope up to the summit of the Ridge. Our trenches ran right along within a short distance of the top, but the top itself was still in German hands. We were a little way down on the wrong side of the crest. The Germans, from their heights, could see and command miles back over our position. You could not approach our front across the open. The only way was through long communicating trenches—miles of trenches it seemed to those of us who had to walk them. The Germans had all the advantages of position. On the east side, where the hill drops down sharply, they were able to place their great guns in massive concrete positions, well concealed, sheltered and difficult to reach.

To the north, facing Lens and its suburb, Lievin, held by the Germans, was the twin town of Bully-Grenay, inside our lines. The railway ran through here. One section of it was ours. Then came five hundred yards held by neither side. German sentries guarded the

other end. The German terminus and our own were both blocked with broken engines and cars. Bully-Grenay, probably because it was so close to Lens, was a favourite target. Day and night the Germans pounded its broken and ruined houses. I arrived there one afternoon shortly after they had dropped two thousand phosgene gas shells on the place. Incidentally our death roll that day was seven civilians—hardly worth the effort, one would think. Just to the south of Grenay was the village of Calonne, unique because our trenches ran through the village itself. Calonne was probably the most admirable example of a fortified village to be found on the western front; seeing its position it had to be, for at any moment, day and night, a raiding party might come on it. All around were broken power stations and pit-heads. Monster heaps of slag, built like pyramids, were a dominating feature of the landscape. A little further south one passed through the ruined Souchez Valley. It had been a prosperous place once, evidently a fine agricultural centre. The houses had been of stone, fine white stone, with solid buildings, good gardens, fertile fields and big churches. Now everything was crushed and broken, and the village itself was little more than a succession of foundation walls of what once had been homes.

Turning round by Hospital Corner—the road was screened here with sacking, so that the enemy might not see your approach—you went

up the muddy hill and then down into the communicating trenches. Across another valley a sharp rise brought you to our front. This left flank of our position on the Ridge was as unhealthy a spot as I have known. German snipers seemed to be able to get men at the most acute angles of the trenches; monster contrivances of destruction—usually cast-iron cylinders full of explosives and ragged bits of metal —dropped in our lines all the time. After the Canadians had taken Vimy I stood one day where the Germans had been and studied our old lines below. Looking from there, my wonder was not at what the Germans had done, but that they had not done more; for I can safely say had the Canadians been where the Germans were, not a single one of the enemy would have been left alive in trenches commanded as these were. The Canadian front ran from Souchez Valley down to Rolincourt.

* * * *

There soon started a series of raids which set the pace for the whole British Army.

Up to this time our raids on the enemy lines had been carried out at night. But the Germans had prepared themselves against our night raids by improvements in their wire entanglements, by increasing watchfulness and in other ways. Now, when they thought themselves relatively safe, we struck in a fresh manner.

The first of the new series of raids was made on December 20th, by the First Canadian

Mounted Rifles. A severe bombardment of the enemy position prepared the way. Our men crept out into No Man's Land in daylight, got to a jumping-off point, and waited. Suddenly we opened our attack. The divisional artillery, far behind, began a creeping barrage, and our men, jumping up from their positions in No Man's Land, advanced behind it right into the Hun lines. On either side they were protected by a barrage of machine-gun fire, and as they reached the German front our Stokes gun made a complete line of smoke shells between them and the enemy machine guns.

Thus we had the German front for four hundred yards definitely boxed in with continuous machine-gun fire on either side and high explosives and smoke bombs behind.

The three hundred Westerners leapt into the German trenches. Every man knew what he had to do. They had practised well beforehand. They knew where they had to look for the dug-outs, and they made straight for them. Each party carried mobile charges with it. The men in the trenches who did not surrender instantly were killed. There was a fight round one machine-gun in the foremost lines, but before its gunners could get to work they were bombed. The men shouted to the Germans to get out of the dug-outs. Those who did so were quickly taken prisoners, those who did not died, for mobile charges of aminol flung down finished them. Before our men left every dug-out and

every hidden store along the front of four hundred yards was blown in the air.

The Canadian Mounted Rifles stayed in the German lines for ninety minutes, and then made their way back with fifty-eight prisoners, including one officer. A good meal had been prepared for them in their own trenches, and whilst they ate it they had the satisfaction of listening to the Germans making an elaborate counter-attack on the abandoned position. They first shelled it heavily and then advanced bit by bit, bombing each bit of trench before they rushed it. They found each section empty. Suspecting a trap, they continued in the same slow way. According to the German official account, the British penetrated the German lines, but had been driven out with heavy losses by the German counter-attacks. Actually the counter-attack had been against empty trenches. It had never been our intention to hold the place.

The Rifles had had one nasty knock earlier in the year. This brilliant success came to them as welcome encouragement. They had suffered very small losses and had killed fully two hundred Germans, besides taking fifty-eight prisoners. Even the advanced posts, muddied from top to toe, freezing and wearied in their outer stations in No Man's Land, bore themselves with special pride, as well they might.

* * * *

The raids that followed were, in an overwhelming number of cases, remarkably successful.

The dash, the enthusiasm and the tremendous force of the raiding parties seemed for a time to destroy the morale of the Germans. It was difficult, of course, for us on our side of the line to tell how the enemy really felt. We could only judge by the frequent feebleness of the resistance, by the tales told by the prisoners brought in, and by the conclusions to be drawn from the numbers killed by our men and our own comparatively light losses. Battalion competed with battalion, brigade with brigade, division with division, in accomplishing the biggest raid.

Soon, too, competition came from outside. When we had reached the figure of one hundred prisoners and one machine-gun in a raid news came from the Ypres salient that the British regiments there had succeeded in taking one hundred and twenty prisoners and two machine-guns. There was no envy, but there was very general determination to beat that figure. But the accounts that we read in the papers arriving from England of the Canadian soldiers getting together and swearing that they would not be licked by any other part of the army, aroused some amusement and not a little contempt. "Anyone would think," said one soldier, "that this was a baseball match, and that we wanted to get the shouts of the crowd." The business was rather too big for that kind of feeling. In most of the raids we killed or captured at least five times as many Germans as our own losses.

All along the line nothing was so remarkable in the weeks following Christmas as the marked ascendency of our troops. Many of these were new men. Two-thirds of the soldiers in many of the raids were fresh drafts from England that had never seen fighting before. The Germans were holding their front line with second-rate men; they were reserving their artillery fire. Refugees from Lens told us that the inhabitants were being turned out of the towns immediately behind the lines at the rate of fully one thousand a day. The only inhabitants left were old men, women and children. The younger men were being taken away to work. The old folk and children were being packed into Switzerland in closed cars. There came a suspicion at times that the Germans might even be moving their heavy guns back. Prisoners told how our artillery searched their lines of communication night after night, preventing supplies of food coming up, exploding their ammunition dumps and often slaughtering their reliefs. Men were ready to surrender at the least opportunity.

Day and night the enemy were given no rest. They never knew at what hour an attack would be begun. They never knew whether artillery preparation meant a mere raid or was the preliminary for the rush of a party of bombers. Our raiding parties would go at midnight and go at dawn, go at noon or shortly before sunset.

The only thing the Huns could reckon on was

that the Canadians would do something unexpected, and they were by no means certain even of that, for when they were prepared for the unexpected the Canadians would adopt some familiar old method just to add to the uncertainty. It was a battle of wits, and the nimbler Canadian wits won.

Visitors to the Canadian front who spent a day or two taking back impressions were apt to go away with the idea that the Germans were just waiting to be wiped out. I have seen enough of war to know the danger of hasty conclusions, but I am bound to admit that on one occasion, at the end of a few days of careful examination of the position at the front, I thought that the Germans were done. We had such apparent ascendency over them that it seemed for us to decide when we would finish the game. Fortunately for me, however, I took a longer time to see what was happening, and even as I was watching a change came over the scene. The Germans stiffened their resistance. Some of the old broken battalions were replaced by others. There was, for example, one regiment of the Guards Reserve facing us, sent to strengthen a weak part of the line. It had come some time before from Russia; its men were giants and their discipline perfect. When we raided them at three o'clock in the morning the troops in the front trenches were shaved, cleaned up and ready for their day's work. Now a regiment whose men shave when they are out on

all-night work by three a.m., is well in hand These Guards Reserves fought like tigers.

After a time the Germans began to counter-attack. Their counter-attacks were generally feeble. In many cases the men showed absolutely no vim, coming up without enthusiasm and welcoming the opportunity to surrender. In the air war it was different. The German planes constantly attempted to come over our lines, and when bad weather conditions did not make it absolutely impossible the airmen of both sides were exceedingly active. One grew accustomed to seeing the shells from the "Archibalds" plastering the sky, while the enemy planes, soaring higher, darted along. One would watch to see them fall. There would be shells all around them and above them. They would seem to be sailing through scores of bursting balls of white. Every now and then one would want to cheer as a shell seemed to get home. But I was never fortunate enough to see a shell bring a plane down on either side. In every case that I knew, the enemy planes were destroyed, not by shell fire, but by airmen battling with them in the sky.

* * * *

Once the fortune of war turned against us. British Columbians had prepared an elaborate and powerful attack on the enemy lines. I was with their division at the time, and had an opportunity of seeing something of the tremendous work, the enthusiasm and the confi-

dence with which such a movement is initiated. There came the night when, making our way through the dense mud of the broad countryside, our way constantly lit up by the German flares, we waited for the hour to strike, when our two thousand men crowded in the trenches were to jump forward. Our gas cylinders were ready to clear the way, our artillery was opening a tremendous barrage. Just then the wind veered round. The raid had to be postponed.

The second time it had again to be postponed. On the third night the attempt was made. The uncertain wind sent the gas back to our own lines. The Germans met us with a fierce resistance, and while the Canadians got in and did great execution, it was at a very heavy cost indeed. The story of how the Iron Brigade fought that night will go down, in the days when the story can be told more fully, among the most glorious annals of Canadian fighting.

* * * *

Mud!

Again mud!

And still again mud!

The men who were blooded on the Somme laughed at the mud of Vimy Ridge. My experiences of the Somme were small, but I did get a little taste of the cloying, slippery, slithery, gluey Somme mud, which is, I believe, like nothing else in the world. Take the worst kind of clay, pound it into fine dust four feet thick, then moisten it with rain; make extra pits at

intervals by the explosions of very heavy shells; fill these pits with more fluid mud. Have your mud at a temperature just above freezing point. Be compelled to stay in it for a day and more at a time—to stand in it, to wallow in it, even to sleep in it. Then you have some idea of the Somme mud.

Vimy was never so bad as this. It is true that the strongest boots had their seams pulled asunder by your efforts to extricate your feet in some sections; fatigue parties would sometimes stick and have to be dug out; and crawling through No Man's Land one would sometimes wonder if the mud would not glue one right to the spot.

Men came back from their spell in the trenches a mud heap. One's steel helmet would be plastered with it and one's waterproof turned into a thick garment of it. But at Vimy I never heard of a man, much less a horse, being drowned in the mud—both of which were far from unknown on the Somme. Still, even Vimy mud meant for every man who had to endure it day after day and week after week, a tax difficult to describe.

At home I am often enough amazed at the note of generous condescension employed by some civilians in talking of the private soldier. They think that he is really a very worthy individual. They are determined to do the fair thing by him after the war, to see that he is reasonably pensioned if wounded, or, if killed, to see that his

widow shall have at least a minimum of food. My God!

I wish it were possible by some means to transfer some paunchy, comfortable citizens for twenty-four hours to the front trenches, to let them endure what our lads are enduring cheerfully, eagerly, month after month. I would not give them more than twenty-four hours at first, for more might kill them. Yet it would be a good thing for them to stand day after day, if they could, as the soldier has to stand, in the front lines, cold, wet and wearied; to face, as the soldier has to face, tremendous tasks when every atom of energy seems used up; to try to sleep, as the soldier has often to try to sleep, in the cold and wet, where the freezing atmosphere penetrates through the thickest clothes, and where the very marrow of one's bones seems frozen. I would like them to know what it is to have the momentary sleep of sheer exhaustion broken by the cold; I would like them, for the good of their souls, to carry the heavy loads, to do the hard work, to live in the mud, to be exiled from home and dear ones as the soldier has to be. I do not speak of the danger, the dropping shells, the protection against gas, the fierce energy of the storming party, for fighting brings exaltation with it, which often makes the danger itself seem small.

3. BEFORE THE RAID

Two thousand men are to raid the Hun lines to-night. They are even now waiting in the front

trenches. Far back, the heavies, with their exact ranges registered, are ready to pour out their big shells. The Stokes guns are in position to pound the Huns section by section, or to make a smoke barrage to shield our advance from machine-gun fire. Our own machine-guns will fire a million rounds, if need be. Their major is exultant. "Want to see a machine-gun barrage, do you? To-night I will show you the real thing." Every man knows his job, and has been drilled in it. Every officer has had his precise instructions. Nothing is left to chance.

Two thousand men are to raid the lines to-night!

* * * *

A friendly colonel gave me a lift to the Divisional Headquarters. "I will pick you up to-morrow, that is if there is anything left of you to pick up," he said, grimly. "It is no use my coming early. They will strafe us badly in reply, and you won't be able to move back from the front for hours. Good luck!"

Two years ago the Germans were up to the villages near by the Divisional Headquarters. The villages close to hand have been long since razed to the ground. The Huns, however, never got as far as the present headquarters. There are curtains still left to the windows, an ornamental clock in the old dining-room and some statuary in the hall. Had Fritz passed through all these would have gone.

Come inside! To our left is the office where

a group of military clerks are working away under a sergeant-major. How the typewriter keys are flying. Underwood and Royal racing with one another. Shorthand writers are feverishly transcribing their notes. One man is busy with a mineograph. Masses of correspondence! Piles of orders! Innumerable forms! Hours are long here and work is hard—8.30 a.m. to 11 p.m., seven days a week, is customary, and no one grumbles.

Behind is another room where staff officers are busy on the unending routine of an army division. Upstairs is the general, his room, bedroom and office combined, and the entrance to it is guarded by his A.D.C. The real business of an A.D.C. is to look after his general, for in war time generals of division are too busy to look after themselves.

We are bound, first, for a room to the right marked "General Staff" on the door. It was once the drawing-room. Now it is the brain box of this section of the army.

There half a dozen men are in the room, and a big bulldog, the mascot of the division. The bulldog was gassed at Ypres and breathes stertorously before the fire. The floor is carpetless. The walls are decorated with maps and plans. There are still other plans on the tables. The shaded electric lights illumine neatly-arranged desks made of unpainted deal. A general staff officer has to keep his papers in order or his work would be in confusion in an hour. There

is a telephone in one corner of the room, a telephone constantly used, and for nothing but important work. Woe be to the subordinate who, by some blunder of the military operator, gets switched on to the telephone in the staff room.

The Chief of Staff sits close to the fire. He is a giant in stature. Many are the tales told of his adventures and of his physical prowess. Some day, when no attacks are impending, I mean to ask him about his adventures in the South African War; old comrades tell me that they would fill many a romance. His juniors declare that he can talk in seventeen languages.

Many of the files and dockets are marked "Secret." Near the door sits a sergeant, the confidential clerk. To the right of the chief is a young staff officer. The telephone keeps him busy. By the wall is an old friend whom I last met somewhere else one evening after a big German bombardment and attempted attack. He was adjutant then, and as I stumbled into his dug-out I interrupted him making up his lists of the wounded and dead, and giving orders for the rebuilding of our trenches. Now he is part of the brains of the division.

It is quite dark. The night is comparatively quiet, save for the rumble of heavy waggons passing through the village street or the dull distant banging of our heavy guns intermittently pounding the German lines. Every now and then an officer comes into the room, his muddy clothes

telling that he is straight from the trenches. The discussions are brief and precise.

A glance at the piles of written papers on the chief's desk helps one to realise something of the immense preparations necessary for even one raid. The general idea is first obtained, and then is worked out on paper down to the minutest details. Every battery, every company, every man is given his exact orders. Each gun section has its written directions telling when it is to fire, where it is to fire, and what it is to fire. Each platoon commander knows where he is to be, how he is to move, and where each one of his men is to go. Provision is made for everything, not merely that the supply of shells shall be on the spot, but that when the men return a meal shall be ready for them; that when our own wounded are brought in there shall be ample preparations for dealing with them; that when the German prisoners come, there will be men to receive them, and so on.

For weeks aerial observers, sky photographers, O-pip officers, scouts in No Man's Land, have worked for this, accumulating facts, studying the enemy lines. The staffs have had to think out not merely what our men can do, but what the enemy may do in reply. Where are the enemy machine-guns, and how can they be silenced before our men go over the top? Failure to silence a single machine-gun may lose us a hundred men. What can the Huns do in the way of counter-attack? How are we to bring

forward our reserve under the heavy barrage behind our lines, which they will open out within a quarter of an hour of our attack? Up to what point dare we go?

All these things have had to be considered. You will find them all worked out in writing on the chief's table. Hundreds of pages of precise details, with maps and diagrams and dockets, are there. When Sergeant What's-his-name reaches the German lines he will know just the dug-out he is to make for, he will have just the right amount of mobile charge to fling down that dug-out after giving the Germans inside a brief opportunity to surrender, and he may have perfect confidence that once that charge leaves his hands, the dug-out will, within a known time—barely long enough for him and his men to get out of the range of the explosion—be blown up sky high.

Dinner is served, and we gather together in the little mess room, a wooden shed in the chateau yard. The mess-sergeant has prepared a more elaborate dinner than usual in honour of the occasion. But no one thinks very much of food to-night. The general sits at the head of the table. He is a fighter, and has proved himself time and again a good man for a tight corner. To-night he tries for a brief half hour to throw off all thought of what is ahead. He starts to talk of indifferent topics. Then he grows suddenly silent, his fingers playing unconsciously with the dessert spoon fronting

him. His eyes have a far-away look. His mind is with the boys resting in the front lines, before the moment comes to go over the top. It is no light thing to be the general who gives the signal for two thousand men to rush to possible death.

Our time is drawing near. Our car is waiting outside. Glance at the gas mask before slipping it over your shoulder and see that the strap of the steel helmet is all right. There will be no opportunity to attend to these later. It is bitterly cold. Take British warm and muffler, for they will both be wanted on the way up.

The car plunges into darkness. Its lamps reveal numerous groups of soldiers coming and going, horse batteries and monster tractors. Their silhouettes against the momentarily illumined background seem weird and unreal.

"We will take the short cut," our guide says to the driver. The lights are switched off and we creep forward in complete darkness along the shorter road. A light now would immediately bring the German guns on us or set the German snipers at work, for they can sweep this road when they please.

Get out, for here we are at the path leading to the trenches. The yellow mud and the thick clay make hard going. You plunge knee deep into a mud heap before you have gone a dozen paces. The German flares went up at regular intervals, temporarily illuminating our paths. Many flares are being sent up to-night, a sure sign that Fritz is nervous. The tearing of shells,

preliminaries of the coming big bombardment, the " whoo-o-f " of our bursting charges, and the occasional rattle of a machine-gun alone break the silence. Then there comes the call, sharp and low: " Who goes there?" A muddy sentry holds us up. We are at the appointed spot. Take up your place and wait patiently, for very soon Hell will be let loose.

4. CHRISTMAS ON THE RIDGE

On Christmas Day, 1914, the British and Germans, after months of fierce fighting, fraternised freely. The spirit of Christmas was too strong for the spirit of war. Both sides met together between the lines. They exchanged drinks, joined in mutual choruses, shook each other by the hand and offered each other smokes. It was one of the most ironic and one of the most human touches of this great war.

On Christmas Day, 1915, there was very little commingling. Bitter memories acted as a barrier, memories of murdered wounded, of tortured prisoners, of poison gas. Strict orders had been issued from headquarters that there was to be no *rapprochement.* According to the accounts published immediately afterwards this order was strictly obeyed. But, as a matter of fact, here and there men did exchange greetings in half-hearted manner. They sat openly on the parapets, chaffing one another. A waiter from Montreal, serving in a German regiment, shouted enquiries after some old friends. Grim jokes

were hurled from side to side until the company officers, uneasy lest treachery might be intended, ordered the men down again.

On Christmas Day, 1916, Canadians and Germans remained strictly apart. The time for even half-hearted Christmas greetings had gone by. Along most of our line the order was issued that if the Germans did nothing, we would do nothing; if the German guns did not fire, we would not fire either. Even this regulation, however, was not universal, for at one point of the line an enterprising Nova Scotian battalion had a raid in the early morning, and brought back a little bunch of German prisoners. "We knew they wouldn't expect us, so we paid them a surprise visit," my old friend the major in charge told me. And a very successful surprise visit, too. At another point the Germans occupied themselves in the afternoon by throwing "rum jars" on our front trenches. But, generally speaking, actual fighting ceased from daylight to dusk on the anniversary of the birth of the Prince of Peace.

The weather had been abominable—rain, sleet and snow. The countryside, far behind the lines, was a picture of dreary desolation. Passing through the quiet French villages to the rear, I came at noon to a spot where two battalions were resting, straight from the trenches. They had had a hard time, and only two days before they had marched back almost worn out. But two days do a lot. They had washed the mud

off their faces and scraped some of it off their clothes. They had had a good, long sleep, and they were ready for all the fun of the day.

Christmas began with church service. Our Anglican padre held an early communion service in the foremost dug-out. Church service over, every man's mind turned to Christmas dinner. The officers had sent out scouts for days before to buy up turkeys and all the good things available. Many of the Christmas parcels from home had not arrived. The Santa Claus ship had gone aground right in the entrance of Boulogne Harbour, blocking the passage way. Most of the Christmas letters and messages from home were not yet to hand.

The French village in which we were staying was typical of its kind. It consisted mainly of several large farms, each constructed on the good old plan of the midden and the dung heap in the courtyard, of ponds that were virtually cesspools just by, and with the farmhouse and farm buildings built around. These barns had been taken over by the army. Their long attics were turned into dormitories. They were very dark, for there were no windows, and the only illumination came from faint candles. They were very draughty, for the tiles were loosely laid, with no under covering, so that the wind and the rain beat and poured through. On either side of the roof were the roughly made bunks. In the centre was the long table. Outside, in the passage way, the cooks stood with their great

tins and monster baking dishes full of cut-up turkey and bacon, dishes of boiled corn, potatoes and green stuffs, apple sauce and gravy.

The men filed along, holding their tin canteens in their hands. As they passed their canteens were heaped with turkey, vegetables and savouries, all in one great pile. One wise man had obtained a washhand basin. He was greeted with a roar of laughter, but it enabled his food to be well spread out. It is impossible on active service to carry plates. An attempt had been made to secure paper plates on that day, but it failed. However, no one was in a mood to grumble. After a man has had a spell in the trenches, a dinner of turkey and sweet corn, with plum pudding to follow, sounds so good that he cares nothing about the way it is served.

Outside in the yard, another company, housed on the lower floors, was being served from its travelling kitchen. Every face wore a happy grin. "Gee!" said one boy, "all I want is for Christmas to come twice a week." A young McGill man was opening, with hearty goodwill, a big case that had arrived from England in time. It contained smokes and other seasonable things for every man.

At each point the colonel tasted the food in orthodox fashion and wished one and all "A Merry Christmas." "Men," he said, "may this be the last Christmas in the trenches. May our job be done and well done before next Christmas comes round, and may we share it with our

own loved ones at home." There was a sudden response, a stir as though a wave of emotion had swept over the crowd.

He called on me to say a word. I have spoken to many assemblies in many lands, from vast mobs of striking Eastern European miners in Pennsylvanian coal fields to the select audience of a Royal Society in London. But as I looked in front of me at the cheering soldiers, with their worn, weatherbeaten faces, their trench-stained garments, their air of resolution, endurance and confidence, I felt that this was no moment for oratory. For a few brief seconds I told them of the messages the dear ones overseas had sent through me to them. "What word shall I send back?" I asked. "Shall I say that to-day your hearts are with them and that you are dwelling on the memories of home?" "You bet your life," shouted one man from the corner. There was no need for me to say more, and I would have found it difficult to go on.

I am tired of the convention which always represents the soldier at the front with a grin on his face. Of course he makes a brave show of it; of course he keeps a specially stiff upper lip when visitors are by. The life of the man in the fighting lines is anything but a time of laughter. It is a life where human energy is taxed to the full. It is a life with its hours of great loneliness, its constant spells of almost incredible endurance. That it has its splendid compensations no one would deny, the soldier

least of all. But it would be well if the civilian would sometimes realise more its hardness and the supreme test of body and soul that it involves.

In the village itself there were notices up about Christmas entertainments. At 2 p.m. there was to be a band concert; at 2.45 there was a show in the Cinema Hall, led by Captain Plunkett and a quartette. The Scots—trust them for that—were not neglected, and Captain W. A. Cameron, of Toronto, was going to lecture on "An hour wi' Burns." The sun had now come out. I could not stay to see the afternoon in the villages, for I was already due in the trenches. The communicating lines up to the front were very long at this point. At first they were well laid with bath mats (bath mats and latticed wooden mats, such as are often found in sculleries), but as one got near the front the mud got thicker and thicker. Daylight was already creeping in by the time we reached the colonel's dug-out. He was just having tea, and he had opened as a Christmas treat a little packet of shortbread. You cannot get Christmas fare in the front lines, whatever imaginative chroniclers may say. He was in the best of spirits, for only a few days before his battalion had conducted a successful raid against the enemy. He told me the story over again, how they had swept through the German lines, destroyed hundreds of yards of defences and come back in safety. Leaving him, I went on to the outposts.

The mud was now almost impossible. "We had better not go round this way," said my guide. "Three men got stuck in here yesterday and had to be dug out. Let's try the other trench." We passed by a detour out into No Man's Land. We were now wading through mud. Go as carefully as one could, it was impossible to avoid splashing. We slipped through our own wires; we moved along, crouching low. "We are just under the German wires now," my friend said. "Move a little to our left and we will come to our advance post." And there we found them. They were soaked, for they were standing almost up to their middles in mud. The parts of their clothes that were visible were all covered with mud. Their steel helmets were mud splashed; their gas helmets were wet. The clouds had gathered again, the rain was beginning to come on. But their bombs were dry and their rifles ready. They were listening intently. At any moment the enemy might be on them. At any moment the enemy's bombs might come hurtling among them.

Again I looked at them. I started to offer the conventional Christmas greeting, "A Merry Christmas," but the words died away on my lips.

It was quite dark by the time we left the front lines, and the journey back was by no means easy. Horses were to have been waiting for us when we got out of the communicating trenches, but by some misunderstanding they had not arrived. My companion made his way to a field

telephone station, and I waited outside. It was a strange Christmas evening. A bitterly cold wind was blowing. There was beating rain, the rain hardening to sleet. All along an immense arc, away behind me to the left, away behind me to the right, away in front, great flares were constantly showing. These were the flares sent up on the German front; the Germans were on three sides of where we now stood. This very road could be, and was, at times swept by their guns from behind. From the distance there came the occasional sound of an exploding shell. Apart from that, the countryside seemed wrapped in the stillness of death.

My companion came out, and we walked on. The horses soon met us, and then came a sharp ride through a heavy hailstorm to the officers' mess of a friendly battalion. We were much later than was expected. Christmas dinner was almost over, but our share had been saved and kept hot. "Take those wet things off," said the colonel, "and get warm. You have nothing to change into! Well, come down in your pyjamas if you like, so long as you come." But the major lent me a tunic, someone lent me something else, and very soon I was sitting at the table. Every one was in high spirits. The brigade had done well in the fight during the last month. It was to do better still in the future. Big plans were ahead and victory was before us. There were the old toasts to be drunk, the old songs to be

sung. And then we gathered our chairs around the fire and exchanged experiences of other days and other climes. But, gazing in the firelight, there came again before my mind the vision of the men I had been with a few hours before, standing even then in the sea of mud in No Man's Land, soaked, worn, half frozen, and yet ready.

5. MAKING READY

RAIDS were an interlude during the winter months. The main work was preparation for the spring offensive. This preparation was three-fold—the working out of plans, the accumulations of guns and ammunitions, and the preparation of the men.

The plans for a big offensive take many weeks to complete after the first idea has been settled by the general staffs concerned. Each army has its sphere of operations limited and defined. The army staff map out the work of each corps. Each corps in turn plans out the work of every division in it, and from the division this minute allotting goes on until, finally, it reaches the platoon of from thirty to forty men.

Take, for example, the instructions prepared by and for each division. These make a substantial typewritten volume, carefully guarded, with every copy numbered. This volume defines and describes everything, from what the operations are to the burial

of the dead, and from special instructions to assaulting troops to the use of tram lines. One section tells what is to be done with wounded prisoners of war. "Wounded prisoners of war should be treated in every way equal to our own wounded." Another section tells of the corps cage that is to be constructed for the accommodation of captured men, how many it is to hold, where it is to be placed, and so on. The co-operation of aircraft and the plans for pack transit, the artillery that is to be used and how it is to be employed, all are given here. This mapping and planning is done with the utmost care. On it the fate of the coming battle primarily—not ultimately—depends.

The second part of the preparations consists in the accumulation of supplies, particularly of supplies for the artillery. In their early fighting the Canadians had few guns and few shells. The regulation ration during one period of 1915 was three shells a gun per day, and this at a time when the enemy had almost unlimited artillery. We paid in men what we saved in shells. In the early days of 1917 the position was completely reversed. The most common sight behind the lines was the unloading and the distributing of vast stocks of ammunition. "We have more shells accumulated here than the entire Expeditionary Force had

during the first year of the war," said an artillery officer to me one day, waving his hand over a very limited bit of ground. Shells were accumulated literally by the tens of thousands of tons. In addition to the corps artillery, each division had its batteries of heavy howitzers and medium howitzers, its heavy and medium trench mortars and heavy mortars, its six-gun batteries of eighteen pounders, its batteries of 4.5 howitzers and of eleven pounders. Behind were counter battery groups, whose business it was to wipe out the enemy artillery when they started to attack our artillery.

Soldiers complain, and with reason, that the world does not realise the immense preparations necessary before a battle can be begun. A big advance would have been impossible or would have spelled only disaster had there not been the most elaborate provision made ahead. The first thing was to prepare roads over which the troops could go forward. Twenty-eight miles of forward roads had to be made and maintained. Most of these roads were in full view of the enemy, and material could only be delivered and work carried out at night. The traffic over them was most destructive. I have seen heavy road engines, dragging heavy guns, destroy a splendidly

laid road in a night, literally tearing it up and pulverizing the work of weeks.

Up to a certain point ordinary macadamised roads are best. But there are times when macadamised roads are impossible. Here the Canadians had a plan of their own. They adopted the plank road, familiar in Canada itself. Over wastes of shell-torn land a hasty foundation of brick and stone and rubble was thrown down, and a plank road was built on it. Three miles of plank road were built before the battle started, and many miles more followed our advance over Vimy Ridge.

In order to obtain the lumber for these roads a composite forestry corps had to be organised and a crude saw-mill built. Happily, Canada includes many skilled lumbermen in its ranks. From this mill about 10,000 feet of timber was turned out quickly, from trees in the neighbouring forests.

A large number of troops were concentrated in a comparatively small space. To house these a number of huts had to be built, for men cannot sleep in the open in winter for any length of time. Fifty thousand horses had to be concentrated within a few miles. The Canadians pride themselves on their horse lines. But even more important than the horse lines was the water supply. Six hundred thousand

gallons a day of water were wanted. Twenty-two engines and twenty-four pumping installations had to be put in; forty-five miles of pipe lines pushed forward close to the front line trenches had to be buried. One reservoir alone held fifty thousand gallons.

Canadians, being practical men, were in favour of bringing all necessary supplies up to the front, so far as they could, by tram lines. A corps tramway system had to be built, twenty miles in all, a system by which shells were brought up almost to the gun positions, by which trolleys ran into dressing stations and human labour in carrying was reduced to a minimum. This system was in full view of the enemy, and could only be operated at night. Yet it was so well laid and so well handled that up to eight hundred and thirty tons were delivered over it in twenty-four hours. Business men were placed in charge, traffic organisers, men who on the pioneer railways of the West had been accustomed to operating under difficult conditions not unsimilar to those at the front.

A story was gleefully told of one young officer who had been a pushing traffic manager in the West, and who was now placed in charge of the rail traffic along a certain section of these lines. He regarded any road transit by motor-car as a reproach

against himself. He would place his men to watch such traffic, finding out where it came from, and then he would go to the officers, Imperial or otherwise, who sent their goods by road and tell them what he thought of them. He worked hard for business. The mere fact that business brought no personal profit to him was a detail. He talked so straight and so hard to some high Imperial officers about their "fool idea" of sending goods by motor to the front, when he could take them up by rail at a tenth of the cost, that they threatened to have him court-martialled. In the end he was promoted.

When the battle opened the tramway system was to prove its value in another way. It was the great means of taking out the wounded. About three hundred push-carts had been prepared, and over these the hurt men were taken smoothly and easily to the casualty clearing stations behind.

Communications had to be maintained. In the early days of the war we ran telephone lines and cables along the sides of the trenches; under a heavy bombardment the cables would be broken and communications hopelessly interrupted. Now an extensive system of deeply buried cables was made and numbers of men were ready to extend these as soon as fresh ground was gained. Air-line trestle routes were pushed

forward to within two thousand yards of the front trenches.

No one who did not witness it can realise the enormous amount of labour required for these things. Engineers do not get anything like the credit they deserve for their work, but to the engineers I, for one, take off my hat.

It was necessary at this stage of the operations to conceal our real artillery strength as much as possible in order that the enemy might not bring up more guns against us, and so the guns were scattered about almost like grains of pepper out of a pepper pot. You never knew, walking across a countryside, when you would hit on a concealed battery, and often enough one's first knowledge of our guns would be the burst of firing just by. Some artillerymen had a whimsical sense of humour. They would wait until a staff officer was passing, the higher the staff officer the better, and then just as his horse was at the nearest point they fired. If the horse took fright they felt that they had scored one. One day they tried this game on a brigadier of my acquaintance. The final results were painful, not to the brigadier, but to the artillerymen.

The winter training concentrated in particular on the development of initiative and of team play among the troops. The

Canadians had become more and more converts to the platoon system. Every platoon consists of from thirty to forty men, with a subaltern and a platoon sergeant, a self-contained unit having with it everything necessary for carrying on such operations as it would be called upon to do. The men in it were taught to work together just as a football team, every man to know everyone else, know his capacity and qualities. It was up to each platoon commander to elaborate schemes for facing any kind of problems they would be up against. The platoon system made each man feel not merely that he was part of a big battalion, but that he was one of a little group of chums, a team all working in the same way for the same end. The advantages of the platoon system were particularly seen later on in tackling nests of machine guns.

While the men were being trained and the lines were being held, we were constantly testing the strength of the Germans. Who were the troops in front of us? What were they? How did they fight? What were their positions like? Many raids were made for no other purpose but to bring in prisoners in order to obtain more information. These prisoners were a constant source of interest. A description of them written at the time will show how we regarded them.

The German prisoner, in his muddy blue-grey uniform, with the fear of death scarce out of his eyes, was wolfishly devouring the regulation meal of "bully" and biscuits. "Good," he said with a satisfied air, when the last crumb had gone, "very good! We don't have food like that on our side."

He was one of the many hundred prisoners captured by the British in the raids of the past few weeks. These men have all been examined and their condition studied. What can be learned from them of conditions in the German Army and in Germany itself?

Look at the men. Naturally they arrive in our lines muddy, dishevelled, and often with faces showing mingled terror and relief. They are not very attractive objects, but can you expect it from men living for days or weeks amid appalling mud, and then, after terrible shell fire, taken captive by a yelling crowd of khaki-clad soldiers, who, backed by bombs, bayonets and mobile charges, rushed the trenches almost before Fritz knew they were there?

The men here come mostly from Bavaria and East Prussia. Of these, the Bavarians are the better fighters. The East Prussian regiments include many German Poles and a considerable proportion of wastrels.

They generally seem sufficiently, although not over-abundantly fed. Last December, deserters arriving in our lines told appalling

tales of starvation. One Pole declared that his company had had nothing but jam, bread and tea for weeks. No one says this now. On the contrary, they talk of a decided improvement in their rations recently. To-day the usual meal in many of the German companies is coffee and bread for breakfast, a sloppy meat dish, half soup, half stew for dinner, and coffee and bread for "tea." Jam is often issued as well, and there is a small supply of artificial butter, tasting like cart grease. Tea is more and more used as a substitute for coffee. When the fighting is strenuous, the food is increased. When in reserve or on a quiet part of the line, it is reduced. But there is general agreement among the prisoners that the food recently has improved.

What of the physique of the men? Some companies are almost incredibly low, others are very good, while most are mixed. Three prisoners brought in recently from one sector formed the most extraordinary trio that could be imagined. They were little more than dwarfs, only two or three inches over five feet high. One had lost his right eye and had to shoot from his left shoulder. The second was half-witted, and had not been called to serve until he was thirty-two. The third was a young degenerate. They said that theirs was a specially short company.

Yet it had been placed in the front line, to hold a part of an important position.

You might conclude from this that the German Army is very low down. Yet a few days later we captured another three prisoners. These were so tall that they made the Canadian who escorted them in, himself over six feet high, look small. They came from a regiment of the Prussian Guard Reserve, recently transferred from the Russian front to the West. It is a very smart body. They fought like demons. But their fighting strength did not save them or their dug-outs from the Canadians.

Many of the Germans are a mixed crowd. The worst companies are being used as cannon fodder, to hold the lines while the preparations for the spring offensive are being carefully made by picked troops behind. But we can say that we find an increasing number of young, immature, small-limbed lads among the prisoners, quite unfitted for winter war.

Clothing is markedly worse than it was. Some men have no underclothing at all, not even a shirt. Others have very poor cotton wear. Wool is markedly absent, except in socks. The Germans are wearing a new artificial wool, made from wood fibre, but apparently neither the soldiers nor the people at home like it. There are constant complaints from wives in letters found on

the men about the scarcity and poorness of clothing material of every kind. They frequently ask the men to send home their old woollen socks, however old and worn out. Every thread of wool is precious.

The Bavarian prisoners grumble openly about the Kaiser, and about the folly of Germany in plunging them into this war. "If Prussia loses this war, we will leave her and become an independent kingdom again," they say. "If the King of Bavaria had been German Emperor, there would have been no war with England," is another common remark. "Wouldn't it be rather mean to leave your pal in a hole?" one young English officer suggested to a Bavarian who was preaching separation. "We couldn't stay, because there will be such heavy taxes to pay, if we lose the war, that they would ruin us," the man replied. When it was suggested to him that Bavaria would have to pay her share, whether she separated from Prussia or not, he scratched his head perplexedly. Such things were beyond a plain peasant soldier.

The letters from home found on the prisoners deal largely with food conditions in Germany. They do not wholly bear out the extremely unfavourable reports of German conditions now circulating in England. They show want, but not starvation in the towns. Some towns suffer more than

others, and all are feeling the pinch. In the country, however, things are not nearly so bad, for the rural population can supplement their rations in many ways. There is shortage of many customary things and absence of some; anxious worrying days, but again, I repeat, so far as the letters show, no general starvation.

Many of the writers openly long for peace, but again, there is little in the letters to suggest despair or consciousness of probable defeat. Late in 1916, when the German Chancellor suggested peace negotiations, the letters were full of expressions of rejoicing. "Thank God, our illustrious Kaiser is at last about to give the world peace," was the common sentiment. That phase has gone, and the most recent letters proclaim confidence in the submarines. The weapon, they say, has at last been found that will beat the Englander! It is always the Englander who looms in the letters as the great foe.

It may be, of course, that the people at home in Germany conceal their worst conditions from their soldier relatives, or are afraid to reveal them. That is a point on which I express no opinion.

Earlier in the war, German soldiers, when taken prisoner, were often sullen and resentful, showing an intense sense of conscious superiority over their enemy. Then the talk

was all dominated by the strain of Deutschland über alles. Here the change was striking.

The talk of Germany dominating the world has gone. Germany, they declare, is now defending herself against those who would destroy her. The one wish of most of the men is to return home, and to hear no more of war. They speak almost with awe and terror of the effect of our artillery fire, of how it searches their lines, smashes their trenches, explodes their ammunition dumps and causes them constant casualties. One man incidentally stated that his company commander visits the lines once in three weeks. The British C.O. lives in a dug-out among his men.

Drilling, training, raiding, holding the trenches, shelling and being shelled, taking down the wounded and burying the dead, carrying up supplies and repairing broken trenches, these were the things that filled up life at the front that winter. The enemy did not leave us alone. The fact that they held its commanding ridge made some parts of our line very uncomfortable. Their artillery was at times most disagreeably active, and you cannot have much artillery activity without paying the price. Divisional headquarters had to move more than once because of enemy shelling. Air work was playing an increasing part in the operations,

although nothing like the part which it was to play in a few months' time.

But life during these months must not be pictured as a time of nothing but work. Each section moved down in its turn to rest behind the lines. Our main rest centre was a mining town some distance behind the front, where you were out of reach of shell fire. Here was our city of delight. To a stranger the town might not have seemed so wonderful. Its normal population of 15,000 had been increased to over 50,000, by refugees and their families from the other side of the line. Despite the red-bricked buildings, which gave it a pleasant air from the outside, it was somewhat dirty and rather muddy, with small shops and narrow by-ways.

But for men whose vision for the last year had been limited to the death trap of Ypres, the muddy pits of the Somme and the sodden trenches facing Vimy Ridge, our town seemed like a paradise. The people were delightful. Everyone was agreed that they were the very best that we had struck, so far, in France. I have heard the man in the ranks criticise Belgian villages. Some divisions will tell you that the French peasants on the Somme were difficult. But we here were as one family. The inhabitants were still dominated by the vision of the German horror. The relatives and friends of many of the people were still over the border under the German heel. Close to us were ruined villages and wrecked homes and a countryside that was

little but a great cemetery. When one got to know the folk here more intimately, they would tell ugly, bitter tales—stark little dramas more appalling than the grimmest potted dramas ever presented at the Guignol. To them, the British soldier came as the rescuer, and they did not hesitate to show their feelings.

Kindness begets kindness. Walking through the streets I noticed a young corporal helping madame—an old, black-gowned dame—to sweep out her shop. A little further down a couple of soldiers were engaged in a great romp with five or six French children. Still further on a wicked young Westerner was allowing a French boy of nine to puff at his cigarette. A friend invited me into his battalion mess, a private house of which one half was inhabited by the family and the other half used for the officers. As an old friend of the family he took me behind the scenes to introduce me to madame and her charming daughter. It was a typical French provincial room, with hideous photographic enlargements on the walls and crude coloured picture postcards of flowers below. The centre ornament was a monster picture of Mr. Lloyd George, cut from an American paper. Madame smiled and her daughter looked shyly up into the English officer's face, smiling, too. "Les soldats anglais sont très gentils," said she. And that is what in one way or another all people said. The discipline of the troops was amazing. There was no drunkenness, no disorder. The

colonel who boasted to me that he had not had a single man before him in the orderly room for weeks may have been exceptionally fortunate. But the men, one and all, seemed to feel that they were on their honour to show the Empire at its best to our Allies.

What did the soldier do in the long rest, do you ask? Every day the motor 'buses formed up in the town square to take off the envied ones on ten days' leave for Blighty. In the morning there was drill. There were new formations to be studied, new methods to be learnt. War is progressing all the time, and the man who has been away from France for a year would scarce have recognised some of our methods. Then there was route marching in plenty. Living in trenches, men lose the knack of marching, and it has to be re-learnt.

In the afternoon there were sports. Here the Y.M.C.A. came in, and some of the Y.M.C.A. leaders were doing a great work in organising contests of every kind. Football, of course, was in winter the great game, but it was not alone. Sport, in one form or another, filled much of our lives.

Our theatre was a prominent institution. It was crowded every night. Our dramatic companies write their own plays. Every soldier knows the "Darling," and at a rumour that he had been wounded, privates in the ranks stopped generals, even generals of divisions—saluted, and asked if it were true. We have had two big

boxing matches for the divisional championship. They were very different from the tournaments at the Holborn Stadium, but there was plenty of hard slogging.

Picture to yourself the scene. Here is a building which normally holds 650 men. To-night it is packed to the ceiling, the crowd filling it right up to the back doorway. Each brigade of the division is allowed so many tickets, and each brigade has sent its contingent to cheer its own representatives.

There is a little group on the platform, to the sides and behind the ring. In the centre next to the referee sits the general. His men love him—the kind of love in which there is just a dash of fear. He is the best general you could want, provided you are not a skulker or a shirker. If you are, heaven pity you! At the other side of the referee is the umpire. He has come up from general headquarters, as the distinctive badge on his arm shows. The army to-day is systematically cultivating boxing, and with good reason. Here is a game which strengthens men in all the manly arts.

It is somewhat extraordinary to look back at our ideals of a few years ago, to the days when the lily-livered throng held sway, when boxing, like everything else in which there was a spice of risk, danger or pain, was looked upon as low and ungentlemanly. I wonder if people understand the change which has come over the men at the front—the men who will dominate you

when they come back—concerning this. If they have not, they are likely to have some surprise when the boys come home. Cheating tradesmen, sweating employers and men of that kidney are not going to find things quite as simple as in the old days.

The boxing might occasionally have aroused some criticism from Mr. J. H. Douglas, had he been referee. One young competitor used the kidney punch at every opportunity. He, however, was the only one to offend. It was really hard slogging, save for a frequent tendency to clinch. Plenty of punishment was given and taken with hearty good will. At the end, after distributing the prizes, the general came to the front for a few minutes' straight talk. His conclusion was significant. We were approaching the last rounds of a long fought-out game. Though our opponent seemed to be weakening, every boxer knew that it was a common trick for the man up against him to play at being beaten while keeping a tremendous punch in reserve. It was for us to be ready against that punch should it come.

In a few days the division would be back in the lines again. The boys would go back fresh. They had washed the mud of the trenches off; they had got themselves in good condition; their whole equipment had been overhauled, and they would be ready to help in the big punch which we all hoped was going to send the German back to the Luxemburg border.

6. VIMY CHANGES HANDS AGAIN

THE great attack on Vimy Ridge was timed for April 8th, 1917, but at the last moment the date was altered to April 9th. The advance was part of a big movement of British troops from the outskirts of Lens to the south of Arras, and was made in co-operation with the French Armies to the south. This was to be the "Great Push" of 1917.

The Canadian lines had been shortened to a front of about 7,000 yards from Kennedy Crater to the left to Commandant House on the right. The left of the line was to advance a comparatively small way, but the right had to push up about 4,000 yards to the edge of Farbus Wood. Were this done the whole of the ridge would fall into our hands and give us command of the country below.

The preliminary work of the battle began twenty days before the advance, when systematic artillery destruction of the German lines was opened in earnest. An enormous number of guns had been accumulating for the blow.

New shells were being used, armour-piercing and delayed fuse-action shells, which penetrated twenty feet and more into the ground, blowing up deep dug-outs. Not more than one-half of our guns were employed before the day. These positions were carefully concealed.

The Germans knew that a big attack was coming on the Arras front, and they knew that the Canadians would attack them at Vimy.

They did not underrate Canadian prowess. "The Canadians are known to be good troops and are, therefore, well suited for assaulting," wrote von Bachmeister, of the 79th Reserve Division, on March 30th. "There are no deserters to be found among the Canadians. . . . It is very certain that the Canadians are planning an attack on a large scale in the immediate future." Day by day every roadway was searched and every suspected dump shelled. The bombardment finally reached such an intensity that for the last few days it was almost impossible for the Germans to bring reliefs or food up to their front lines.

The chalky country around Vimy lends itself to mining. In addition to the numerous mines and counter-mines on the hill, run by either side, infantry subways had been built, deep down, with galleries radiating from them. Thanks to these, it was possible to bring supplies and men right up to the front in safety. During the afternoon and night of April 8th men moved up and occupied their positions. The hour was approaching. Every soldier knew what was expected of him. The plan of battle had been carefully explained to all. The troops for weeks before had been drilled over dummy trenches, modelled on the German. Each man knew where he had to go and what he had to do. He knew where the dug-outs were that he had to bomb. There was an extraordinary spirit of keenness displayed. The commanding officers attributed

this largely to the fact that the men had been taken into their leaders' confidence. As General Tuxford of the Third Brigade said, his brigade "had a very clear idea of what was expected of it and how it best could accomplish it. . . . The result of this was shown in the extraordinary spirit of keenness displayed by all ranks—a moral that has never been surpassed."

The German commanders believed Vimy to be almost impregnable. They held the upper ground. On the ground above Souchez Village they were strengthening their positions by building a number of concealed strong points of concrete and steel, that would resist almost anything except a direct hit by heavy shell. Even that would not always wreck them. A considerable part of the front was broken up by a series of craters—some of enormous size—made by systematic mine explosions. Mine craters are among the most valuable means of defence, for an attacking enemy must creep round the sides, where he can easily be swept off by a few men with machine guns. These craters were far too big to bridge. Still, more to the left was a series of very fine trenches of the most up-to-date type. Scattered all around were machine-gun groups, well placed and protected. Machine-gunners rank with snipers as the pick of the German infantry. Behind the lines, in concrete and steel forts, were numbers of heavy guns. The gunners knew every vital spot ahead and had it exactly registered.

How is a soldier equipped when he goes into battle? Let me take the men of one brigade. They were in field service marching order, with no packs, and with haversacks on backs, messtins slung outside haversacks, box gas masks over all equipment, and the old-fashioned gas helmet underneath. Some carried overcoats and some leather jerkins. Besides his rifle and bayonet and one hundred and twenty cartridges, every man had either a pick or a shovel, four hand grenades, two sandbags, two aeroplane flares, a Verey light, a candle and a box of matches. He took with him two days' rations and his iron ration. It will thus be seen that the load was not a light one.

The coming advance was divided ahead into four stages. Four imaginary lines were drawn: Black, red, blue and brown. The first attacking parties were to go through to the Black line, following their barrage. When they took it they were to dig themselves in, and "moppers up" were to search the land they had overrun, blowing up dug-outs, and attending to any of the enemy who still remained there. Then a second party was to go through the first and attack the Red line, a third through the second for the Blue, and so on to the final assault on the Brown line. Every step was exactly timed. So many minutes were allowed for capture of the Black line, a pause of two hours after the Red line was taken, and a pause of one and a half hours on the Blue line. Eight and a half hours

were allowed for the whole operation. Then, at the end, patrols were to push out into the valley beyond.

The front was divided into four sections, one for each division. The Fifth Imperial Division had been attached to the Canadians; part of it was held in reserve, while the Thirteenth Brigade took part in the assault with the Second Division.

For two days before the attack the weather had been fine. On the night of the 8th the sky grew overcast, and a bit of wind came up. Then a slight drizzle began to fall, and the wind increased, blowing, fortunately, right with us. The drizzle increased to a heavy downfall, and the rain turned to sleetish snow. By early morning the whole field of battle was one mass of beating rain and snow, driven before the wind. In the hours before dawn the Canadian troops stood waiting in the trenches. It was bitterly cold, and the drenching rain soaked men. The enemy was keeping up a precautionary bombardment on our trenches. Some of the shells got home, and one or two did considerable damage. At one spot two mortars and two hundred and fifty rounds were blown up a few minutes before zero.

Zero, the hour for the beginning of the battle, was five-thirty. Exactly to the second close on a thousand guns opened fire. Men declared that they had never imagined such a pandemonium before. The whole front seemed lit up with a

sheet of flame. During the previous days the most careful observation had been taken of the German concealed battery positions. These had been let alone until now. Suddenly every one of these positions was continuously and heavily fired upon. We saw the result afterwards, great concrete blocks hurled aside like children's toys, steel doors warped and bent, as though a giant had shaken them. Some guns were firing to cover all points of communication at the rear, and some were maintaining a standing barrage. There was a rolling barrage, by eighteen-pounder guns, moving forward in average leaps of one hundred yards. At a given second the infantry, every man keyed up to his highest, climbed over the trenches and moved forward, following the barrage.

The whole front was one mass of craters and shell holes. The fire had been so intense that it had eliminated the German front trenches. When soldiers reached them they passed them by without recognition. Only broken cupolas and traces of what had been observation posts remained. The men tramped forward, following the barrage ahead, going through the ever-increasing enemy fire. The shell holes—the place seemed to be all shell holes—were full of icy water. Wounded men who fell into one of these holes died as a rule, drowned in the mud.

Let us follow the advance division by division. The First Division had to attack the southern slope of the ridge, on a front of, roughly, two

thousand yards, its final objective being two and a half miles from the British front line. The Second and Third Brigades led the way, the Second Brigade on the right, and the Highland Brigade to the left, with the Canadian Scottish, the Royal Montreal Regiment and the 48th Highlanders of Toronto ahead, and the Royal Highlanders supporting. Behind was the First Brigade.

At first the opposition was slight, and the enemy artillery fire particularly poor. Soon, however, the whole line came under heavy machine-gun and rifle fire. Machine-guns seemed to be everywhere. Instantly platoons, practising what they had learned during the previous weeks, set out to envelop and bomb them. The losses, mainly from machine-gun fire, soon became very heavy. Every officer in the 10th Battalion, save one, was killed or wounded. Now was the time for men's mettle to reveal itself. Wounded refused to notice their wounds. When all the officers of a company were struck down sergeants were ready to lead on. Lieutenant Willis worked his way up to a machine-gun that was firing heavily on his battalion (the 5th) and, single-handed, captured it, bombing the crew out. Another young officer, Lieutenant Williams of the 1st Battalion, attacked a machine-gun crew, and captured it with seventeen unwounded prisoners; Lieutenant Stephenson of the 10th Battalion saw that his men were experiencing great trouble from a machine-gun.

He organised a party to attack it. As he moved up he was shot through the throat. He kept on notwithstanding, and killed or wounded several of the machine-gun crew. The gun was captured.

The Highland Brigade to the left got away beautifully, and was soon in the thick of a fight. The pipers marched with the battalions, skirling bravely. The 16th Battalion was proud of its pipe-major, who marched in step, turning aside for nothing. Wounded men rose on their elbows to cheer him as he passed. Colonel Peck of the 16th was ill with gastritis. But he rose from his bed to fight with his men, and kept on with them until night. Then, when victory was secure, he collapsed, and had to be carried off the field. The 48th Highlanders were led by Lieut.-Colonel C. E. Bent, who had served the regiment continuously since May, 1915, rising from second in command of a company to command of the battalion. The 48th had a rather bad experience in the assembly trenches in No Man's Land before the battle opened. The enemy sent over a number of rifle grenades and opened heavy machine-gun fire. Several officers of the 48th were struck. Captain Allistair Fraser was wounded when leading his men into the first German line. He kept on; he was again wounded, this time very badly in the groin. He now crawled on. Lieutenant Maitland Newman was so badly wounded that he could not move, but, after he had fallen to the ground, he

continued to direct his men. Captain MacTier was shot through the thigh. He continued with his company several yards further, shouting encouragement, until he could stand no longer. These are typical cases. The records of almost every battalion could give similar instances. The men were heroes.

Nothing could keep the Canadians back. When one company was wiped out another was sent up to take its place. The Black line was reached and passed. Now the two brigades were on to the Red line. Opposition stiffened. Isolated groups of Germans fought with the utmost desperation. One machine-gun, concealed in concrete in a haystack, caused heavy loss to the 16th Battalion. Eight officers of this battalion were killed and thirteen wounded that day.

It was now the turn of the First Brigade. The 1st Battalion was acting as a flanking force. It started in the rear of the Second Brigade, capturing a portion of the Red line, taking seventy-four prisoners and three machine-guns. At 9.55, schedule time, the First Brigade moved up. It leapt through the Second and Third Brigades, which, having done their work, were now consolidating. It captured the Blue line by eleven o'clock, and at an hour after noon the Brown line was in its hands. The soldiers could now see the wonderful plain stretched out on the other side of the ridge. The weather had cleared, and Douai, twelve miles distant, stood out.

Between it and the ridge was a great stretch of mining villages and factories.

Farbus Wood, on the eastern downward slope of the ridge, was still being shelled by our guns. As soon as the artillery ceased the First went on again. There was a line of batteries of German guns at the bottom of the wood. The Canadians, with a cheer, rushed them. The Germans stood, many of them, to their guns bravely, firing their last charges point-blank. By a quarter to six the First Division reported that their scouts had cleared Farbus Wood and had reached the railway beyond, without opposition.

The Second Division attacked with four brigades, in place of three, and attacked on a two-battalion frontage in place of, as with others, three battalions in the line. Eight tanks were given to co-operate with this division. They were useless. They could not penetrate through the terrible mud, and not one of them even reached the Black line.

The Fourth and Fifth Brigades attacked the Zwischen Stellung, a strong German trench, at a point about 250 yards west of Les Tilleuls. This was the Black line. Pushing over the shell-pitted ground, amid the heavily beating snow and rain, scarcely able to see a few paces ahead, they were soon met by very heavy machine-gun fire. For a brief space the 19th Battalion was held up by the guns at Balloon Trench. The troops immediately in front took cover, while the flanks stretched out almost automatically,

closed around and captured the guns. Colonels led their battalions. Colonel Jones, a very gallant soldier, was wounded badly as he led the 21st forward. He was killed sixteen months afterwards, again leading his men into the fight, in our great advance of August, 1918. On this day, at Vimy, the battalion pressed on, gained their objective and captured a German gun with fifteen rounds of ammunition. The Fourth Brigade consolidated on the Black line. The Fifth Brigade pressed on to the Red line. Now the Thirteenth Imperial Brigade took a hand in the game. The troops were mainly from two famous Imperial regiments, the Royal West Kents and the King's Own Scottish Borderers. The West Kents and the Canadians had a special interest in each other, for they had been the regiment of the Canadians' first commander in the field, General Alderson.

The Imperials did their part well. They made their way through Goulot Wood, capturing about two hundred prisoners, four machine-guns, and two eight-inch howitzers. Then they advanced to the final objective, where they were met by a nest of artillery. Two guns fired at them at point-blank range. A company of the K.O.S.B. attacked them with rifle grenades and Lewis guns. They took three 5.9 howitzers, four 77 mm. guns, one damaged howitzer, and a 90 mm. gun. The Canadians appreciated to the full the assistance given to them, and showed their appreciation in every possible way.

To go back to the remainder of the Second Division. As the troops moved further on the German resistance stiffened. At first many of the Huns had been so demoralised by our artillery fire that they surrendered easily. Some of the trenches on the Lens-Arras road were found to be unoccupied, save for isolated parties, who put up a very stout fight. Grenadier, Graben and Dump Trenches were held in force, with many men and machine-guns. The Canadians worked round these, some companies holding the front while others enveloped and rushed them, taking in the two trenches three hundred and ninety-six prisoners. The 25th Battalion, which was now in the front, lost its commander, Major de Lancey. The second in command, Major A. O. Blois, although wounded, took over charge and continued to direct his men all day. By 10 a.m. the division was well forward. The 29th Battalion had taken Thelus Trench and the 28th and 31st Battalions had carried the western end of Thelus Village. The 29th fought through a sunken road to a mill, which had given some of our troops much trouble. The third objective was ours at a few minutes past 11 o'clock.

While "mopping up" was proceeding vigorously, the troops came on a number of caves, an historic feature of Vimy Ridge. These caves are said to have been the place of refuge of the Huguenots from Arras, where they met and worshipped when proscribed and hunted. Now they were refuges of another kind. Numbers of

German troops, unable to endure our shell fire, had taken shelter in them. One lieutenant bagged over one hundred men in a single cave. The caves were deep enough to be safe. It was an extraordinary sensation to go down in them in the midst of the overwhelming noise and muddy misery above, and to find oneself in sombre quiet, in a series of chambers where a division might be given refuge. Our men had provided themselves ahead with a special kind of bomb for throwing down dug-outs and caves. It did not kill, but made such an intolerable reek that any below had to come out or be choked.

The hottest German resistance was, perhaps, on the last line of all. Here the 27th and 29th Battalions met with heavy opposition. The German gunners held their line of concrete gun positions well, firing point-blank as the Canadians came over the slope. They used machine-guns, rifles and revolvers. The gun positions were taken at the point of the bayonet.

The Second Division by early in the afternoon had seized all its objectives, and was pushing out its patrols through Farbus Village beyond. The brigadier of the foremost troops was anxious to go on. The weather had cleared. His men were flushed with victory. Could he have struck then, in conjunction with the troops of the other divisions near by, we might have swept through the line of villages beyond, that afterwards was to hold us for so long. But the limit of artillery range had been reached. Hours before word had

been given for the guns to move up. Slipping, slithering, fighting, swearing, the gunners were striving to force their horses on. But it was almost impossible to move them. Guns were half buried in mud. Wheels slipped through the mire with nothing to grip. The Sixth Brigade endeavoured that night to seize the railway line and the station east of Farbus Wood. But it was strongly held with many machine-guns.

The Third Division had not so far to go as the First or Second, its final objective being the Red line. A great part of its work was the clearing of La Folie Wood, which was strongly held by the enemy. The fighting here much resembled that on other parts. The famous brigades led the way, the Eighth to the right, composed of four battalions of the Canadian Mounted Rifles; and the Seventh to the left, including the Royal Canadian Regiment, the "Princess Pats," the 42nd and the 49th. . . . The snow, rain and wind caused much trouble, for troops could not see where they were. Nevertheless, the Seventh Brigade was in the Black line by 6 o'clock and the Eighth soon after.

The troops were very seriously hampered by the position on their left, and it was clear that things were not going well there. The left flank should by this time have been captured by the Fourth Division, but it was still in enemy hands. Raking machine-gun fire from it was causing much loss, particularly to the 42nd. As this battalion advanced German troops sprang up

behind it. The troops had to form a defensive flank, pivoting on a crater. A communication trench was dug, which also served as a defensive flank. By 9 o'clock the final objective had been taken, many hundreds of prisoners captured, and Folie Wood cleared. But the position of the division was by no means comfortable, for its whole left was threatened by a well-placed and active foe.

The Fourth Division, on the extreme left, covered a frontage of about 2,000 yards. The attack here was made by the Eleventh and Twelfth Brigades. The 87th and 102nd Battalions led the attack of the Eleventh Brigade. A commanding hillock, known as "The Pimple," dominated the position, and the enemy had covertly constructed a number of strong concrete and steel machine-gun positions, which swept the place in every direction. These had been built so secretly and camouflaged so cleverly that their presence had not been discovered by our artillery. When our troops jumped over the top, they were promptly met by a devastating fire. The 87th Battalion lost 60 per cent. of its men in a very short time, and its support, the 75th, did not reach it. The 102nd Battalion attained its objective, but every officer was killed or wounded, and the command of the battalion fell on a company sergeant-major. The 54th, supporting the 102nd, reached its objective, but it could not remain there, and had to retire. When the troops advanced they

found Germans would spring up behind them and attack them from the rear. The enemy had built tunnels in the slope and would conceal themselves while our men passed and then come out. The right of the 87th was held up, and never reached the enemy's front line.

Hour after hour Germans and Canadians fought on, often hand to hand. The machine-gun positions could not be broken down. The Twelfth Brigade was faring little better. At the start the ground was in such an appalling state that the troops could not keep up with the barrage. They groped along almost blindly, because of the storm. They were fighting around a nest of craters. When the 38th imagined that they had captured their crater positions, and were consolidating, they found that three craters behind them were still in enemy hands. When the 78th, who were in support, pushed through the 38th they succeeded in reaching their first objective, in spite of the heavy fire from the Pimple. Some men pushed on to their final objective, actually reaching it. They were immediately attacked from behind by German troops who emerged from dug-outs and overwhelmed them. Not a man came back. We only learned where they had got days afterwards, when the final objective was taken, and the bodies of the men of the 78th found there. While these were being slaughtered, a considerable body of Germans counter-attacked the weakened main body of the 78th. Every available man at

the headquarters of the 38th and 78th Battalions had to be sent up and a company of sixty men from the 73rd was hurried forward. Even then it seemed for a considerable time that our attack might be turned into a retreat. The troops were hard put to it to hold the line.

The 72nd Battalion was fighting in the centre of the brigade. The trenches here had in part been absolutely wiped out by shell fire. All sense of direction was lost. The troops fought until they got right around Montreal Crater, one of the largest on the western front. They kept on until they struck against the German tram line which goes down the hill in the direction of Souchez Village. But they could go no further. How desperately the 73rd fought can be judged by the casualties. Every officer in A Company was killed or wounded, and only fourteen of the rank and file unharmed; only one officer and twelve of other ranks were left in B Company; fifteen rank and file in C Company, and eighteen rank and file in D Company. The 73rd Battalion, which attacked on the extreme left, was the most fortunate of all. It took its objective easily, with very few casualties.

By early in the afternoon the position of the Fourth Division was very unsatisfactory. The losses had been heavy and there was little to show for them. The men had displayed splendid gallantry, but the mud, which was specially bad at this section of the ridge, and the unbroken German positions had proved too strong. Over

one part of the line Canadians and Germans were maintaining an intermittent fight from shell hole to shell hole and from crater to crater.

The job had to be done. Troops were reformed in the afternoon. In the night they attacked again; the 85th and the 42nd driving the enemy over the crest of the Pimple. Next day another attack completely captured that position. With it in our hands the rest was a matter of detail.

The battle of Vimy Ridge was a great triumph for Canada. Our casualties were substantial. But our gain was great. Our prisoners alone numbered 3,342, including sixty-two officers. The guns taken numbered thirty. We had secured the key of one of the most important sections of the north.

During the days that followed we went on further, stretching our gains at the furthest point to six and a half miles.

7. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIDGE

It was only when we came to examine at leisure the new German positions at Vimy and Petit Vimy and in the villages beyond, that we began to realise more fully the nature of the proposition which faced us. We had entered into a new stage of the war, a stage when trenches had given way to cement and chilled steel.

Within a few hundred yards I came on three lines of gun casements, each casement separate and self-contained. They had sides and tops five

feet thick of reinforced concrete with doors of chilled steel. Below them were deep dug-outs in which men could live. These were for very heavy guns and howitzers.

Elsewhere were smaller stations. Here was one little fort just big enough to hold a man, with sides of thick steel and moveable thick steel peepholes all round. Over the whole was a covering a foot thick of cement. This was an observation post. When the French were fighting over this region in 1915, reports came through that German soldiers were locked in these little forts by means of staples padlocked outside, so that they had to stay at their posts whatever happened and fight to the last. I am bound to say that my observation did not confirm this. I carefully examined several of these little forts, but could find no trace of staples or of anywhere staples could be placed. The report probably arose because some of the French troops had seen German soldiers chained to their guns. This does happen, and we found them in the advance at Vimy. Chaining the men to the guns is a kind of "field punishment" for minor breaches of discipline in the German Army. It does not mean cowardice on the part of the troops or a desire to run away, although I have no doubt that it might be used for men who were considered doubtful, if they were not shot on the spot. But no German soldiers at Vimy needed to be chained to the guns. They stood up to us well. I am ready enough to

denounce the crimes and weaknesses of our enemies when I see them, as this book shows, but there is no sense in attributing to them crimes or weaknesses which are not theirs.

A seemingly innocent-looking ruined house in the village of Petit Vimy had inside walls of cement thirty-nine inches thick. In front of it was a nose of seven feet reinforced concrete, with two machine-gun emplacements. The machine-guns here swept the road half a mile off. What looked like a broken haystack was really a concealed concrete fort. Returning to the hill top I gazed across the country to the lines in the distance, which the Germans still held. I knew that many a village in the curve just ahead contained or concealed numerous houses such as these.

We found many interesting things on the other side of the hill. Take, for example, the village just below the Farbus Wood. The Germans evidently reckoned that they were going to remain here for a very long time. Owing to the sharp dip of the hill, it was difficult for our shells to reach them, so they had devoted themselves at leisure elaborating means of comfort in the place. There were magnificent officers' quarters, a beer garden and summer garden. You approached the place through a torn stretch of wood, where the tops and stems of every tree had been shot off. Underfoot wild hyacinths and poppies, nightshade, cornflowers and scarlet pimpernel, charlock and goosefoot, thistle and

forget-me-nots were doing their best to wipe out the traces of war.

First, one came to an elaborate dressing station, seven rooms in all, dug deep in the hillside. Close by there was the beer garden after the model of a Swiss chalet, with its porch still left intact.

A notice on the wall outside marked the change of proprietorship.

DO-DROP INN.

Working Parties a Speciality.
Daylight Parties Preferred.
Picks and Shovels are
NOT Provided HERE.
Compree.
(Proprietors) The Byng Boys.
A. A. A.

A few hundred yards further on across the torn and broken land—twelve hundred shells had fallen into a field the day before, doing practically no damage except to the earth—you came on a prize set of dug-outs. The place was rather stiff going, for there were plenty of shell craters to be skirted.

These great dug-outs, formerly the German divisional headquarters, were certainly the finest I have ever seen. There were several entrances, the centre one was marked "Komandantur Zollernhaus." There was a whole terrace round the roof.

A few steps brought us to a small platform, and a few more to a fine open corridor. The walls and roof were painted white, with a neat decorative design in black. The main staircase to the first floor ran directly from this. It was a staircase good enough for any private house.

We entered a central underground chamber, a fairly large room supported by pillars. Two long, well-cushioned seats, meeting in a kind of cosy corner, were on one side, and facing them was a well-made dark wood table, polished in its natural grain. There was a wooden skirting to the wall about four feet high, painted a delicate shade of blue. The whole of the upper part of the wall was covered by a series of Colonial style panels, dark wood edging with cream white centres. It was really very effective.

There were other tables for work, with telephones (capital telephones) to hand. A stove, electric light, and good leather seats—probably found in the ruined houses nearby—completed the apartment. On either side ran the offices of the staff, with the kitchens farther on.

All of these were well underground, with a mighty covering of earth above. But to make assurance of safety doubly sure, there was still another floor below, equally big, well ventilated and equally comfortable.

"If the German officers had spent a little less time in their dug-outs and a little more in their trenches, things might have gone better with them," said one veteran general to me. On the

day of the great battle one officer from this very Kommandantur came out to see what all the disturbance was about. He no more dreamed of capture than Londoners dream of meeting Prussian Guardsmen in Piccadilly. To his surprise some Canadian soldiers just coming up greeted him and took him off to safety.

A German captain hurried up the hill, followed by two servants carrying his kit. He was calling in English as he went, "Of course I surrender. Of course I surrender. But I can only be taken by an officer of equal rank."

A Canadian corporal took him in hand. "Cut that out, d—— quick. You come right along and help to carry that stretcher."

When the officer's servants saw him at work they dropped their packs, opened them, and by signs invited our troops to help themselves. Some of the finds were curious. A corporal I know found a pile of ladies' underwear. Still more was found in another dug-out. They may have been used for amateur theatricals. One colonel of artillery excited much interest because of his extensive stock of silk underwear.

Our boys were certainly undergoing a very strenuous experience on the other side of the ridge. All the world knows how our great spring offensive, after starting so well, had halted. Who was to blame? Whatever the reason, we were not going forward as we had hoped. The Ridge was ours, the immediate villages beyond were ours, but here we were,

planted down in the valley, while the enemy in the ring of villages around, from Lens to beyond Fresnoy, Angres and Avillon, Méricourt and Acheville, and a score of others, were concentrating their fire on us.

I shall not soon forget one afternoon's journey over this frontal position. For one reason or another my army friends did not show any particular desire to let me visit there. Day after day I started out, but each day there were so many things to do and so many people to interview, that we never got very far across. On the first day we finished up at Farbus. On the next day we actually went down as far as the ruins of Givenchy, the village from whose wrecked buildings we could survey Lens, looking little more than a stone's throw away through our powerful glasses. It was just the other side of the valley, yet we knew that between us and Lens there was a barrier so far found impossible to surmount. But on another day I secured a guide, a Canadian corporal, who not only did not mind where he went himself, but—what was much more important to me—did not mind where I went with him. As we swung over the crest of the hill, we got talking about men and books and things. He told me that he did not have much time for reading. He chiefly relied on the London letter in a certain overseas paper. As it happened this was a letter which I have written for years under a pseudonym every week. When I told him this it made an

immediate bond between us. We hurried through the wood down into the shell-torn land beyond, and on until we came to brigade headquarters. Here I had the good fortune to meet General Macdonell. Visitors were not numerous in these regions. Almost the sole visitor seen is a young staff officer who comes up on duty, and I was the first non-soldier to reach this spot. So the general made me at home, and after lunch we started out across the valley to our front. There could be no question of shelter or protection here. The trenches were simple. Our troops, when they first hurried over the valley pursuing the Germans, had simply dug themselves in little one-man pits affording the minimum of shelter. These pits had been gradually extended until by now shallow connected trenches had been formed. In the old German trenches there was some protection, thanks to the concrete emplacements still left.

There was nothing of the glitter or pomp of war here. Every man was drawn fine. The general had his eyes everywhere. He had a ready joke for the lads standing fast in their trenches, a word of warning here, a command there. "You must have that fire out," he commanded some men who, tired of cold food, had lit a few sticks of wood to warm their tea, "the smoke will draw shell fire." It is a general's business on his rounds to see everything and to go everywhere.

The Germans were not firing many shells

that afternoon. They had apparently used up their stock on the previous afternoon. They were busy to-day sending "pineapples" over. The "pineapple" is a cone much more considerable than a bomb, fired from a catapult, able to travel some distance and capable of causing very extensive wounds. I shall not soon forget how the general stood over some of the wounded men—ghastly enough, for they had not yet reached the field dressing station, and had not yet been fully bandaged up. "Poor boys! poor boys!" There was a break in his voice as he said it. For you see "Mac" is a father to his men. He will tell you, if you ask, that he is old enough to be their father, and you soon realise their wounds are blows at his own heart.

We were away out somewhere in the direction of Fresnoy when I chanced to glance at my watch. "I am due at dinner to-night," I said. "I have to be right back at brigade headquarters at eight. I will never do it." "Let us make an attempt, anyway," said the general, and so we turned back. There came a singing through the air, and a big black burst ahead of us; then another and another. The Germans had started planting shells between us and the brigade headquarters. My companion looked at them with a quiet eye. "If we move a bit to the right," said he, "we'll manage to skirt them." Still they continued on what ought to have been our direct path. "I agree with S.", said the general, mentioning the name of

another commander. "It is too bad to have to think that your future depends on the exact length of a fuse a German gunner is fixing away back beyond at this minute." But I notice that this did not seem to worry him, and we soon skirted the zone of fire.

At brigade headquarters I found my runner waiting for me. A plunge over the shell-torn fields brought us up towards the wood again. "Don't let us stop here," said the corporal. "If they lengthen their fuses a bit they will just get us." And so we hurried on.

Over the top of the ridge we were out of the worst of it. Some way down the long slope I found two battalions busy at games. Over their heads and beyond them the enemy shells were dropping on the Bapaume road. A little way beyond that road a cavalry band was playing in the open for the troops. The three distinct lines —the men at play, the shelled road and the band with the loitering soldiers around—seemed all like distinct strata. Still a little further on I found my car awaiting me. One of the Canadian padres, Canon Scott, was standing near by. He, too, was going, and so we went together. Before long we got out of the reach of the shell fire and entered some of the most beautiful, peaceful country that could be imagined. It was early summer, and the country was at the full tide of beauty. There were few traces of war here. The trees were rich in the fullness of their young green leaves, very unlike the stunted and torn

woods I had just left. The fields were cultivated, a strange contrast to the shell-cratered lands I had walked over. Canon Scott pointed out to me some of the noted points of the countryside round. There was one of the most interesting of the châteaux of all France close by. He asked me if I had seen one of his poems, and he began to recite it to me as we were going along, and I recall the words now. The whole thing seemed a dream.

* * * *

Soon we had reached the mining country and then the town itself. As we approached, two comely young French women, seated outside a cabaret, jumped to attention. I was glad that the canon was looking towards me and not in the direction of the ladies, for, as our car swept by, they solemnly saluted, and then with an impudent gesture put their thumbs on their noses and stretched out their fingers in an impudent "geste." I have a slight suspicion that they winked, but since our driver was putting on speed, I could not be quite certain of that. Since the canon was not looking, that does not matter.

Dear Canon Scott, brave, straight, simple veteran, whose whole life is better sermon than any spoken words, all the army loves him. What he has done on the battle front it would take a volume to tell. At the battle of the Somme news came to him that his son had been killed in one of our storming parties. Towards

evening he marched out into No Man's Land, with head erect, in full view of the enemy. He sought out the body of his boy, dug a grave, laid him to his final rest with one farewell kiss, and then, unhurried, marched back. The very enemy refrained from firing on him!

I reached my dinner appointment at two minutes to eight. The general and several guests who had come for the evening were waiting in a beautiful old garden. A friendly A.D.C. took me in hand, lent me soap and towel and clothes-brush and helped me to rub some of the dust and mud and darker stains from my uniform. A few minutes later I found myself seated around a dining table of a dignified old house, with shaded lights, dainty napery and good fare. As I raised my glass to drink—a very welcome and much-needed drink—there came back to me the memory of a man who, four hours before, away up in the Valley of Death, had told me, with a harsh voice, of his one great torment there. It was not shells nor danger, but lack of water, for it was very scarce on those front lines. It did not seem right that I should be back here, and he, who had suffered so much, should still be there.

8. WITH THE GUNNERS OUTSIDE LENS

No Canadian can walk through the streets of Lièvin, adjoining Lens, without a thrill of pride. It is a rabbit warren of ruins, ruined streets, ruined railways, ruined public buildings. The

Germans held it for a long time under our concentrated fire. One finds to-day place after place, the remains of the great concrete dugouts and gun positions erected by the Germans, with walls so thick and roofs so solid that it would seem impossible for any shell to touch them.

Liévin is absolutely wrecked. No civilian lives in or near it. No troops remain in it an hour longer than they need. The Germans are always bombarding it, just as we are always bombarding them in Lens over the way. Street after street of tottering bits of walls give one the impression of sordid ruin, different altogether from the tragic ruins of Ypres or the squares, magnificent in their ruin, of Arras.

I looked across from a point of vantage into Lens itself. Some day, I suppose, we will be fighting in its streets, as we fought in the streets of Liévin. I gazed beyond to a monster church standing on a hill top behind, a landmark far and wide. But Lens itself, as I have seen it at different times, just a crumpled mass of masonry. Bits of house were standing, little bits of walls, the dulled lines of old factories, the shelled remnants of a prosperous mining centre. I could picture the life of the place, the German companies living in cellars, the unceasing rain of gas shells and high explosives, the daily list of dead and wounded. Their lot must be as unenviable as that of any men on earth.

We have fought to recover Lens for considerably over two years. In the spring of 1917, standing in a ruined village within our lines at the foot of Vimy Ridge, I could see the streets of Lens itself so clearly through a powerful pair of glasses that it seemed almost possible to throw a stone into them. During the whole of the summer and early autumn of 1917, the Canadian troops fought around the place. From Vimy Ridge we shifted to the north side, when the great battle of Hill 70, one of the most brilliant and daring in which our boys have been engaged, gave us one side of the town. The fighting around Lièvin gave us the adjoining village. Only one big step remains to be taken to make Lens ours.

Soldiers who had been down these old streets had marked up in chalk, with soldier wit, odd names for every ruin which they had used as dug-outs. Fosses and cités, crassiers and woods, electric stations and old mills; none who has been among them will ever forget them.

A little way in front of us—I almost wrote across the street—were the German trenches. We knew them all, from Newgate Trench to Nabob Alley, from the heart of the Cité St. Auguste to the nearest slag heap facing Lièvin. It seemed hardly possible to believe that this village could have stood so long in our way. There are certain points in this war that are symbols. Vimy is one of them, Ypres another, Messines Ridge a third. Had Germany taken

Ypres from us the loss of territory might not have counted for much; the loss of prestige would have been tremendous. So it is with Lens, and the day that our troops—I trust it may be the Canadians—sweep through those broken and stained streets, the war will have made a new and definite stage forward.

I moved out of Liévin and travelled up towards another point. Suddenly my guide, familiar with the ground, stopped. Walking by myself, I would not have been able to distinguish this spot from a hundred others, but when he moved a certain way I saw that there was a door. Our shout brought a greeting in good Canadian, and two minutes later I was down in a cellar shaking hands with the captain in charge of the gun battery concealed immediately around.

There was an O-Pip station not far off, and as we stood talking of old times and old ways, reports were constantly coming in from it. Later I climbed to the top of the O-Pip and obtained another view of Lens. There were two officers here, and they were both in high spirits. On the previous afternoon and evening they had been giving Fritz a little gingering up.

They had located two batteries. "First, we drove them underground with H.E. (high explosives)," said the captain. "Then we dropped some gas shells on them. My! Our new gas shells are real beauties. One could see the great volume of gas spreading all around from

them. We had no more fire from either of those batteries yesterday afternoon." Later on in the evening, having discovered that German reliefs were to take place, they bided their time, and then suddenly opened out at every point with all our guns. Some 2,000 shells were dropped on the Germans in and around Lens that night. "Their hospitals are pretty busy this morning," said one officer curtly.

Men operating a concealed battery at the front live on the edge of a precipice, and they know it. This battery was, as I have said, very carefully concealed. When I moved around and was shown gun after gun in position, the surrounding disguise was so excellent that at first I seemed to be taking part in a game of make-believe. But there is no game about it. The gun positions share, of course, the usual shelling of the district. A few days before one shell had, as it chanced, come right down the cellar steps, but it was a "dud," and no serious harm was done. But the real trouble occurs when the gun position is located. Then the other side simply concentrates its heavy artillery on it and the great shells come crashing, tearing and exploding, breaking everything.

That, however, does not worry your gunner, officer or man. Threatened folk live long. It is the gunner's business not to be discovered. In each emplacement every weapon was kept in the pink of condition. I saw the toilette of the guns, more elaborate and more scrupulously and

carefully done than the toilette of any babe. The working parts have to be cleaned with a meticulous cleanness that the outsider might consider almost unnecessary. Every man in charge prides himself on his own gunpit, on its neatness, the ease of its approaches, the convenient arrangements of its ammunition. One does not wonder that the men get an affection for their guns. These, I saw, had been used hard the night before. Some of them had fired more shots in the night than one of our own batteries did in 1915 in a month. They were still ready, however, for, even as we stood, the word came along to open fire again, and the men were at their stations and the firing began with the precision of a peace-time exhibition. It seemed impossible to believe, despite the sounds of explosions without, that this little cranking and moving and pulling could mean that a few seconds later shells would burst on spots where a lucky hit might send the dismembered remnants of two score men far and wide. "Hope this gives them hell," said the gunner as he drove his shell home. "The only good Hun is a dead Hun."

Don't be shocked. After all, can you expect a man living in the midst of ruin, ever in the presence of death, to retain to the full the polite speech and delicate ways of a Toronto dinner party? If you do, you won't get it.

The annoying part of artillery fire is that you rarely know what you have accomplished. In

an infantry charge you very soon find out whether or not you have failed or succeeded, but with guns you mostly have to take results by faith. And so we went back to the cellar, our fire over, to listen to a fresh tune on the gramophone, to gaze on a hundred pictures which my host had rescued from the illustrated papers, and had plastered around his walls, and to sit on a broken chair salvaged from one of the deserted houses.

* * * *

Some way behind Lens I saw, a little later, another side of the war. I was crossing a place which I had known months before our advance at Vimy Ridge as a notorious danger point. Now, however, it was so safe, thanks to our movement forward, that it was at last felt that the French people might come back to go over their own ground. An occasional shell was bursting in a meadow a little way off. A party of French men and women were busy amid the ruins. The men were all inclined to be elderly; your young Frenchman is in the army. You can imagine their feelings when they gazed on the blurred remnants of what had been their homes. Madame went to look for her favourite rose corner. My God! Had this spot once been a rose corner! Even now, however, she could trace out amid the yellow stains left by the high explosives which had burst there, something which recalled the spot to her.

Living amid these ruins one never fully realises that in normal times people spent their days here under peace conditions, that walls were whole and houses had roofs, with babies toddling down the paths, and that fathers came home from their day's work to find their children waiting for them with a kiss. I had known this spot as nothing but ruin and had never pictured it as anything else. But these people had known it, up to the dreadful day when the German advance drove them out, as their home.

They had come back for the day, not to mourn over destruction, but to recover their lost treasures. They had spades with them and axes, for before they had fled on the arrival of the Germans they had buried their money and their plate. Now they were going to dig them up.

One burly and prosperous-looking citizen dug feverishly in vain. He would not believe that his stock of treasures could have gone. He tried again and again and again, but without result. Others were more fortunate. Here was a woman, a young widow; her husband had died for France. A neighbour had come with her to help her to seek her buried store. Some English soldiers standing around joined in. She carefully traced out the spot, so many feet away from one fixed object. Her neighbour started to dig. You could see the strained look on her face. Now they were getting closer. The man was digging steadily without expression of any kind, evidently accustomed to the use of the

spade. Nothing could disturb his calm! Then, when he reached a certain depth, the woman could control herself no longer. She put her arm down, she fumbled, she tore some earth to one side; then, a little bit of a stout bag could be seen. It did not take long to get it out. Its contents were untouched, and the widow was over £100 richer. The husband who had saved it with her would never come back, but at least there was something to help to feed the little ones.

Looking at Liévin, it seemed impossible that the ruined streets of this village or of Lens would ever rise again. But a little way behind there were villages springing up afresh, wooden huts erected, people beginning to prepare the ground, ground which a year ago looked as impossible as much of No Man's Land looks to-day. Everyone was helping them. The British Army and the French Army clear up what they can, and make the reconquered territories of France fit to be the home of a fresh generation of an heroic race.

9. CURRIE

WHILE the fighting was still going on around Vimy Ridge and Lens it was announced that Sir Julian Byng, Chief of the Canadian Army Corps, had been promoted to an army command, and that the man named as his successor was General Currie, head of the First Canadian Division. The news was not a surprise. Since

April everyone had known that a change was coming. Sir Julian Byng's triumph at Vimy marked him for a higher command. The Canadians lost him with regret, for he had led them well. But they naturally desired that their corps should be under the command of one of themselves, and everything pointed to Currie as the man.

Less than three years earlier Sir Arthur Currie had been a real estate broker in the city of Victoria, B.C. Now he was commander of an Army Corps, commander, that is to say, of close on 100,000 men.

The fate of every soldier under him lay largely in his hands, for the commander of an Army Corps in the field on active service possesses more actual power over his troops than absolute monarch ever had over his subjects. He is, and must be, if his corps is to be efficient, an autocrat.

The promotion of this "civilian soldier" to an Army Corps command was a sign of the times. There had been great complaint among many sections of the territorials in the forces from Great Britain that their officers, however efficient, were rarely given promotion among the fighting branches of the army higher than that of colonel in command of a battalion. The highest positions, it was claimed, were kept for regular soldiers who had received general staff training, men who had devoted their lives from early manhood to the study of war. The

commander of an Army Corps is director of one of the most complex organisations in the world. His range of duty is in the highest degree technical. On his organising ability ultimately depends the full use of the great artillery, the numerous brigades of infantry, the multiple machinery of transport. He controls a department of intelligence whose completeness would have made Napoleon wonder, and a strength in heavy guns that Oyama or Kitchener never had. "This is no task for amateur soldiers," said old staff men.

Weeks before the change was formally announced I had discussed it with dozens of men in the corps, from "G.S.O.1's" to subalterns; everywhere there was full confidence in Currie. The Canadians and the British Staff attached to the Canadian Corps knew him, and knowing him they trusted him. This young man, still in the early forties, the real estate broker of yesterday, had the confidence and good-will of every division. The men in the ranks knew him as a "lucky" general, and in war a reputation for luck counts for a great deal.

A giant physically, with big clean-shaven face. The eyes are laughing eyes, and the face has the freshness and clearness of youth. A quiet man, neither fussy nor a blusterer; genial; a man to make friends and keep them. That is one's first impression. But let the moment arrive and you soon note that the face takes a stern mould. Your ultimate impression is one of strength.

Here is a man with a "punch," a soldier who "gets there" with a smile, if smiling will get him there, but who "gets there" all the time. I have known many armies and many commanders. I have never known an army that has had more complete confidence in its leader than the Canadian Army Corps has in Sir Arthur Currie.

Currie is Canadian-born. His family still lives in Ontario at Strathroy, where the people who remembered him at the beginning of the war as "the big Currie boy who went West," now love to tell anecdotes of his youth. He settled in Victoria when a young man, first as a schoolmaster. From school he drifted to life insurance. Old friends of those early days describe him as a quiet, hard-working young fellow who stuck to his job. In life insurance his associates did the "jollying" and played the part of the good fellows. Then, next morning, young Currie would come around and quietly clinch the business. From life insurance he went on to real estate. Those were the days when real estate was booming in the West, and when a man with moderate luck could hardly help making money. Arthur Currie soon became one of the big men of Victoria.

Before the war the average Canadian did not take soldiering seriously. The militia were generally regarded as a great social organisation, a kind of freemasonry. To belong to them gave a man local standing and the training

camps were good picnics. Currie regarded soldiering in a different fashion. He joined the militia as a private in the 5th Regiment Canadian Garrison Artillery in 1897. Three years later he received his commission. In the following year he was in command of a company. His company was soon noted as one of the most efficient on the coast. In the eight years of his command it won the Efficiency Shield seven times. Twelve years after enlisting he was colonel commanding the regiment. With him in command the 5th was known as the best gunnery corps in the Dominion.

In 1913 he resigned his artillery command to raise an infantry battalion, the "Gay Gordons," at Victoria. He worked hard at soldiering, at staff courses and at training. When the war broke out it was inevitable that he should be offered the command of a Canadian brigade. In September, 1915, he rose from the command of a brigade to a division. He had his opportunity and he made full use of it.

That is a good record, but Currie is bigger than his record. His real secret as a soldier is the quality of the man himself. His is a magnetic personality. His men serve him to the end because they love and admire him. The real general of to-day has to be effective as the business man is effective, but he has to be something very much more. He has to inspire a feeling of confidence and cheerfulness among all ranks.

He must be a white man through and through. And that is just what Currie is.

Let me tell of three typical meetings with Currie at Passchendaele. Visiting a friend to the north-east of Ypres one morning, I suddenly came on the corps commander. He had been up to the front, seeing things for himself. The place that morning was very unhealthy. Fritz was searching the roads behind, and bursts of his shrapnel were making little white clouds in the sky.

Now according to the German theory of war this is a place where the commander of an army corps should not be. He is too precious a personality to risk. But our practice is different. Currie, like Byng, goes up to see things for himself. I am quite certain that he never even noticed that morning the shelling that was going on. He had other things much more important to think about than his own safety. All of his generals are the same, but then all our generals in the whole Empire Army are. I met an Australian colleague who was full of admiration for one of our generals of division. "He came along our way," he said, "and we walked up the line together. It was the hottest part I have ever been in, but he did not turn a hair. If I had been alone I would have gone back, but I think he enjoyed it." Incidentally my Australian colleague would not have gone back. He enjoyed it as much as the general.

The British practice—for Imperial and Canadian generals both act the same way—is the right one. The soldier likes to see his commander up the line. He likes his colonel to go in the hottest spot. The worst reputation any officer could possibly have is of a readiness to seek shelter. The German way is, logically, the right way, if you are reckoning men as machines, but the British way gives the dash and go and enthusiasm in our armies which time after time have won seemingly hopeless and impossible fields.

My second view of Currie was in his own headquarters. He lived in a little hut divided into two. One section of the hut was his sleeping and living room. The other was heaped with papers. Close to the door there was just room for one or two people to stand. To the side there was a relief map of the district where we were fighting. Here Currie sat for a large part of each day interviewing commanders, settling problems and arranging the plans that soon were to bring us victory.

A telephone by his desk kept him in touch with the supreme army command. A varied staff outside were carrying on the intricate work of the conduct of an army corps in the field. Now the general would go out to preside in a bigger room over the daily conference of his chiefs, at which everything was thoroughly threshed out. Now at meal times he would go

to the simple mess a little way off, where his visitors were men of every grade, from an Allied king who had come to greet Canada, to the young subaltern called to meet his commander that he might receive personal congratulations for some great deed of courage.

No visitor could fail to be struck with two things at General Currie's headquarters. The first was the air of quiet and calm that surrounded the man. There was no feverish rush. You did not hear typewriters rattle, and there was no endless stream of messengers, couriers and aide-de-camps pouring into his presence. You would find heaps of typewriters busy enough in the immediate vicinity, but things were so organised by the Canadian Corps that routine matters were dealt with by routine men and the commander was left free to think out the real decisions. You might at first even receive the impression of leisure. But when you knew the commander better you would discover that your appointment had been carefully fitted in among many others, that conference and review, interview and parade, and conference again followed one another in an unceasing succession from early morning until late at night. There were some active and cheerful young staff officers in a room near by who were kept very busy mapping out the general's hours and the general's minutes.

The third occasion, all within a few days of one another, showed another aspect of the man.

We were in the midst of a big battle. On the previous day one section of our army corps had attacked the enemy front at Passchendaele, and after a very hard fight had taken our first objective. Other troops were to come up to take the second line. We all knew that it was a man's job in front of the corps. Victory could not be obtained without heavy cost.

I drove down to the outskirts of a village, where the corps commander was to inspect some troops who were shortly to undertake one of these desperate assaults. There was the usual state and ceremony of such an occasion, the divisional commander waiting with his staff to receive him, the music from the bands, and the general salute.

Currie marched along the ranks, closely scrutinising all. This was a brigade of the First Division, which he himself had led in the old days. Here and there he stopped for a word of encouragement or recognition. Then, at the word of command the men were paraded around him in hollow squares, close up, with the officers in front. A table was brought out from a cottage near by, and the general stood on it, in view of all the soldiers.

He spoke simply, sincerely, as soldier to soldier. I am accustomed to great orators. As a lad I heard Gladstone. I have been bewitched by Laurier. I have witnessed Lloyd George sweeping the House of Commons into frenzied enthusiasm.

But this man's speech was different. Its very simplicity was its charm. He told the men exactly what they had to do. He pointed out the difficulties.

"The Commander-in-Chief has called on us to do a big job. It has got to be done," he said. "It is going to be your business to make the final assault and capture the ridge. I promise you that you will not be called upon to advance —as you never will be—until everything has been done that can be done to clear the way for you. After that it is up to you, and I leave it to you with confidence."

One needed only to look around the close set ranks to see how the appeal went home. The soldiers could scarcely wait till the divisional commander gave the word before they broke into cheer after cheer.

Generals who lack the divine touch of leadership write out messages of appreciation, which they send round in general orders to be read to the troops on parade. But the general who really leads, goes among the men as well and tells them with his own voice what he thinks of them. This is what the great commanders of past ages have done. This is what Currie does.

Here is a man solely devoted to one end—victory. He is impatient of intrigues, of self-seeking, of notoriety hunting. He is proud of and jealous for his men. He thinks in his heart of hearts, although he does not say so, that there never was, in the history of the world,

such a fighting man as the Canadian soldier is to-day. He is determined that this splendid fighting man is not going to have his strength weakened or is not going to be needlessly sacrificed by blundering incompetence. He is the trustee of his army, his trust being to see that his men get the best chance, have the best weapons, and have every opportunity to use their courage and strength to the full. He is quite prepared, as he has shown time after time, to throw his army wholesale, if needs be, into the most difficult and costly enterprises, but he wants to satisfy himself first of all that the costly way is the best way. He regards his soldiers as human beings; he remembers the homes they have left, and while he would never let thoughts of their home ties weaken his resolution, he is not going to bring desolation to homes for nothing.

Next, he sees the work of his army as a whole. Years ago, before this war began, I was discussing with a high German officer the possibilities of the raising of civilian armies. "Your armies raised from civilians during war time will be mere rabble," said he. I pointed out what the United States had done in the Civil War. "Conditions were different then," said my German expert. "War to-day is an exact science. The most profound knowledge is required of innumerable technical subjects, from the problems of transport to the problems of ballistics. By the time civilians have got the idea of these

problems the all-professional army will have beaten them out of the field." But Currie has always in his mind these vital sides of an army's well being. When he has been in control of a district for a short time, the railways bring the shells up to the guns. At Passchendaele his first business was to build roads, to strengthen railways, to improve means of communication everywhere. He is as keenly interested in the problem of getting a hundred tons more of material over a light railway as he is in a fighting battalion's discipline, for he realises that each is as essential as the other in the army's well-being.

He sees the army as a great co-ordinated and self-contained force, having everything that it wants as part of itself. He would have infantry, cavalry and artillery, airmen and mining companies, railway engineers, repair shops for big guns, all under the one central control, all perfectly fitting in together, and moving as parts of one great machine. That, I think, is what he hopes the Canadian corps will be one day—a wholly self-contained unit—and until it is that it will never reach its full efficiency.

This big, smooth-faced, clear-spoken general gave one at every meeting a feeling of confidence and assurance. He does not burke difficulties; he does not try to make out to you that everything is all right all the time. He faces difficulties straightly, but he faces them in such a way that he convinces you that they are going

to be overcome. His own spirit was well conveyed in the concluding words of a speech he recently gave in Paris:

"Hommes et femmes de France, soyez patients; nous sommes vainqueurs. Je ne m'occupe pas de ce qui est arrivé en Russie, je donnais parfaitement les évènements de la frontière italienne où déjà, je crois, un heureux changement est apparent, j'ai tout lieu de croire que nos sacrifices et les votres n'euront pas été vains et que, avec l'aide cette autre grande nation de langue anglaise, les Etats Unis d'Amerique, nous aurons une victoire nette, décisive et concluante. Nous ne combattons pas pour une paix mais pour une victoire; nous pouvons, nous devons gagner; nous gagnerons et lorsque à l'horizon tous ces nuages noirs se seront dissipés, un monde nouveau, meilleur, plus brillant et plus heureux éclora. Nous aurons accompli notre devoir comme heritièrs du passe et comme gardiens de l'avenir; et nos enfants vivront et travailleront en securité, persuades que les avocats de l'hypocrisie, de l'agrandissement à outrance de tout ce que represente le 'kultur' allemande, ne prevaudront pas contre l'amour de la justice, de la liberté et de l'honneur. Souhaitons que toujours l'amitié de la France et de l'Empire Britannique, cimentée dans le sang sur les champs de bataille de la grande guerre, durera éternellement."

In the words of the army, "What's the matter with Currie? He's all right. Who's all right? Currie."

10. THE ROAD TO YPRES

In October, 1917, the Canadian Army Corps received the highest compliment yet paid to it. Sir Douglas Haig summoned it back north from Lens, to take part in the great renewed battle for the Flanders ridges. It was to attack Passchendaele, the crowning point of the ridges, which effort after effort had failed to wrest from the Germans.

Back to Ypres!

"The city of mournful memories," the general called it, and there was a note of tragedy in his voice.

"This is an accursed place," said another veteran bitterly. "I hope when this job is cleaned up that I never see Ypres again."

They spoke with passion and with reason. There is scarcely a field without its special tale. And that tale is usually of a long, dogged resistance and of months of the most wearisome war. Almost hemmed in by the enemy on the hills around, with victories that seemed to lead nowhere, with fighting as hard as anything ever experienced, whose chief gain was that in the end we stood where we had left off—life in Ypres in the old days was a slow bleeding to death.

What memories the journey to the old salient brought up! We came to "Pop"—Poperinghe

the maps call it, but life in war time is too short for the whole name. The quaint town, with its narrow streets, its great church, and its somewhat mean buildings, stands in the memories of hundreds of thousands of soldiers for the town of comfort, for "Pop" is the first civilian town of any size behind the trenches. Here for a time you could get away from army affairs. There were eating houses that would welcome you, and above all, give you food. There were shops where you could fit yourself out, from a new battery for your electric torch to a waterproof.

Fritz has strafed "Pop" at intervals for three years past. Sometimes he seemed to forget it for a few weeks, then he turned his wrath on it afresh. When he was cross he opened fire with a long-range gun on the place, and when he was very cross he sent a fleet of aeroplanes to seek it out in the darkness and try to drop bombs. While I was last there he was very cross.

Ruined houses were so familiar in this town that no one noticed them: another ruin or two did not make much difference. The worthy Flemings took bombardments as all in the day's work. Those who survived were making fortunes in trade with the soldiers. Those who were blown to bits were not here to grumble. "After all, it is some satisfaction that if you get a direct hit it is all over before you know anything about it," said one old soldier to me one night when the bombs were falling by the dozen.

To many of us "Pop" spelt "Skindles," a place for food, famous wherever soldiers foregather. Here, if fortunate enough to get a seat, you could have a really good meal. Every room was crowded to the full when dinner time came with officers, mostly from the trenches.

On the first evening I was there we had scarcely room to move. You packed your gas bag and tin hat on the floor. My neighbours at the table turned out to be friends of old friends, and it does not take long to make new friendships here.

We dined! I suppose that to some people the place would have seemed crude and the accommodation rough. To us it was Paradise! When dinner was over a young officer went to the piano at the end of the room. No one noticed the sound of the big guns outside, the steady "wh-o-of" that kept on with brief intervals all the time.

Everyone sang, old songs and new. A war chorus followed the latest hit from the newest musical comedy. "Another Little Drink" gave way to a ballad that brought back memories of home. Now someone started "The Long, Long Trail," and we hushed our voices to listen to him, for he was worth hearing. My neighbour tried to crack his walnuts with his fist—for at "Pop" they think the soldier should be above the use of nutcrackers—and, failing to do so, kept time with his fork on the table. The veteran "dug-out" doing an office job somewhere

outside the town and doing it well, and the junior sub. joined in equally. Then came a big crowning chorus, "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah," and the soldiers' song of the American Civil War swept the room. As though to add to its volume the guns at the same moment burst out with redoubled strength.

That night Fritz bombed us. He made such a clatter and litter that he disturbed our sleep for an hour or two. But what did it matter! We had lived! Many of the youngsters around me at that dinner table were going straight back to the trenches. Some of them a few days later were to fall, leading their platoons and companies over the top. "Glory!" . . .

Then there was Marie, Marie of the Flemish restaurant where we breakfasted. In her establishment is a gallery of old Flemish paintings, some of them apparently worthy to be masterpieces, and some of them atrocities. Were they put up there, I wonder, that some of us, fancying our knowledge of Art, might delude ourselves by discovering a Franz Hals, a concealed der Helst, or an unknown Adriaen Broewer! I do not think so, for Marie and madame and the patron, and the rest of the attendants of this little Flemish restaurant are, I like to believe, too kindly and too honest for any such trick.

One night a bomb fell quite close to the house, splintering some of the windows and crashing in others. But at eight in the morning Marie

was ready, placidly smiling in true Flemish style, with her coffee and bacon and eggs for those who came. Bombs were an interlude; breakfast was business!

A Belgian colonel invited me to come along to his rooms. "See the only house in Poperinghe that has whole windows," said he. He exaggerated. There were some more, but not many of them. My home, during the few days I was there, was fairly typical. The glass of the windows had been blown out and rough boards put in its place, boards with abundant interstices for ventilation, day and night. Water from some unknown source ran along one side of the floor. The only light was what you brought yourself, and the only heat what you could get from putting on more clothes. But, after all, one does not visit the neighbourhood of the Ypres salient for a picnic.

Moving out of the town we passed along the long, straight road which many soldiers know so well, the road of poplars leading to Vlamertinghe. Then we reached the splendid church, still a landmark, standing where the roads meet. It is to-day more a ruin than ever. The Germans have for two years made its tower a sight for their fire. Everything from 17-inch shells downwards has been aimed at it. Still it stands—blasted, burned, great holes torn out of it, the fine house of God behind, roofless and a wreck. I wanted to pause here to revisit the cemetery, where old friends lie, and where, among others,

the brothers Grenfell were buried. But there was no time to wait.

Now we reach the lunatic asylum. This was the place where the German Army, when it paid its temporary visit to Ypres in 1914, released all the patients and drove idiots and raving folk, melancholics and paraphienetics, the delirious and the frenzied, out into the open, uncared for and unattended. Fritz has really some pretty ideas of annoying his victims. In olden days we looked on the man who tortured the insane as lower than the brute who led the blind into a ditch. Other days, other morals!

As we passed the lunatic asylum I glanced ahead. Ypres should be well in sight now. Where was the great tower of the cathedral? Where was the city, even the ruined city that I had left in 1916? I looked again and saw nothing but a crumpled mass of stones.

When I got into the town itself I failed to recognise parts of it. The cathedral tower had gone. Whole streets had been not merely wiped out, but so blown to bits that one could hardly tell that houses had been there at all. The very blurred outlines of the ruined town are being gradually eliminated from Ypres. As we passed through the Germans were still busy with it. Enemy shrapnel was bursting overhead, and as we got beyond the town the German guns opened for a morning hate on the road we had just passed by. Day and night the enemy kept it up. During the day he shelled at intervals,

occasionally trying to raid the place with Gothas. At night he bombed from both aeroplanes and shells. During the time I was near by his nightly bombs were counted by the hundred and sometimes by the many hundred. But at any rate Ypres gave us one joke. Someone had secured a big picture from a famous illustrated London weekly, "Ypres, the city now out of reach of the German shells." Maybe you cannot see the humour of that caption! We could!

11. "THIS WAY TO HELL"---A RETROSPECT

WHEN the battalions marched back through Ypres towards the trenches facing Passchendaele, many solemn memories were recalled. The name of Ypres is graven deep in the heart of Canada. Here her sons proved her right to call herself a nation. Here in a few short months during 1915-16 she had forty thousand casualties, including ten thousand dead.

It is difficult to realise what a short way the "Bloody Salient" is from London. I have travelled on the Hampstead tube in the morning, had tea under bombardment beyond Zillebeke in the afternoon, and shared in a fight on Hill 60 at night. The London morning papers are often delivered at the brigade headquarters in the same evening. And yet, half a day apart, London and Ypres represent to this day the very opposite extremes of life.

In one of the side streets close to what is left of the old infantry barracks, some one put up

a sign with a finger mark pointing to the road homewards, "This way to Blighty." Underneath it another hand painted a second sign, pointing to the opposite direction, "This way to Hell." Most soldiers who have lived any time in or near Ypres during this war will not dispute the word.

As you move up to the old city and approach it along the Vlamertinghe road you come to the spot where the Canadians moved out on April 22nd, 1915, on the day of the fight that made the name of the First Contingent immortal.

Recall the scene. Ypres at this time was still a busy populated centre, despite occasional bombardments. The Belgians were indignant because the Germans had fired a number of shells against the famous Cloth Hall. Once or twice civilians had evacuated the place only to come back again. There were tea houses open and hot baths to be had. There were places where the soldier could obtain food, refreshment, warmth and rest. The men fighting outside in the trenches at Hooge and Hill 60 and around St. Julien thought of the warmth and comfort of Ypres as the soldier a year later thought of the joys of Boulogne.

The Canadians were here, fresh from Salisbury Plain. They had marched up a few weeks before, had taken part in a little fighting, particularly around Hill 60 and Neuve Chapelle, and had experienced some of the discomforts of the trenches in winter. They had come for the

first time into close contact with the regular British soldiers, and they liked them. "We all agree that we have never met and never can meet better men than British regular soldiers," one young fellow wrote to me after his first experience of them. "They have given us a very high standard to live up to." The Princess Patricia's—the famous regiment composed at first almost solely of old soldiers raised by a Montreal millionaire, who served as one of its officers—were in barracks. Every one was expecting that in a few weeks our line would be so far advanced that Ypres, now still near the front, would soon be out of range of the enemy guns. For great things were ahead. It was an open secret that there was to be a monster attack, the long expected "Great Push," further south. Our armies had concentrated down there and everything was ready. The line fronting Ypres itself was held, it was true, somewhat lightly, but Fritz would soon have enough to think about apart from this.

On April 18th, the German fire suddenly became heavy. One regiment was driven out of its barracks and had to camp in a field outside the town. Some of the inhabitants began to take alarm and packed a few necessaries, ready to depart; a few even moved out. Then, on April 22nd, like a stroke of Fate, doom fell. Shells began to rain down from three sides, shrapnel bursting overhead, high explosives tearing up street after street. People rushed

from their shops. Mothers caught up their babies; fathers tried to clear a way for their children; and young and old, terror stricken, rushed from their houses. No use seeking shelter in houses now! No use trying to save valued treasures! Happy was the man who escaped with a whole skin. Large numbers were killed in their houses before they could get away. Large numbers more, men, women, and children were blown to pieces by high explosives, as they attempted to leave the town.

The scene in Ypres on that terrible afternoon can never be told in full detail. The soldiers were moving out, swiftly, quietly, to protect the front. The Germans had discovered a new way of death. *Sauve qui peut!* In the streets the British Provost Marshal, a Canadian officer, was doing splendid work organising the retirement of the civilians.

I did not visit Ypres until some weeks afterwards, but even then I could see in what was left of the narrow streets the march of that great panic. Here was a big doll's perambulator in the roadway. The little girl whose darling treasure it was had dragged it thus far and could get it no further. It lay now on its side, with its yellow body still looking strangely fresh amid the ruins. Here was a desk lying open in a room, with a number of papers still on it, and with the last word half written. Can you not imagine how the man, working at his accounts, had started up and tried to rush out, when death

came. Here was a piano with music in front of it, and with a chair just by. A child had evidently been receiving her afternoon lesson. Every house had its story and every story was the same.

All along the Vlamertinghe road right down to Poperinghe, away out to the north of Ypres towards St. Julien, there were throngs of panic-stricken people on that Thursday afternoon. The Canadian troops in reserve were holding special sports. A big football match was on. The men noticed casually that the bombardment was heavier than usual; bigger guns were being used, and more often. But everyone becomes accustomed to gunfire after a few days at the front; a little more or a little less does not matter. Late in the afternoon numbers of villagers came rushing up, going westwards. These were the steel-nerved folk who had elected to stay in their villages up to now, despite bombardment. Now even their steel nerves were broken. They tried to explain by signs, when questioned, that the French troops that held the northern lines adjoining the British were wiped out, and that the Germans were advancing. From Vlamertinghe, the Canadian reserves, climbing up trees, could see, four kilometers away, a line of cloud like a bank of fog. It was the poison belt.

It took men time to realise what was happening. The front was open and the Germans were moving right on. A breach had been made

between our lines and the French. If Ypres was to be saved the Canadians must save it. If Ypres fell, Calais and Boulogne might well fall too. The whole British line would be turned and unspeakable disaster would fall on our entire army.

There is no need to re-tell the story of the second battle of Ypres, how these young soldiers marched out in the darkness, how they charged strong German lines, how they stood day after day against overwhelming hosts, with little artillery and inferior weapons. Veterans still recall their tales in their dug-outs in snatches and in incidents, how, when they found themselves almost surrounded, they laughed and swore and joked. "There seems to be a war somewhere round here, Bill," one lad would remark to his mate, when all of the company left would barely form a platoon. "I believe we'll have to give these sausage eaters a lickin' before we're through." Battalions reduced to a few score men, and with their munitions exhausted, gathered fresh munitions from the dead, and when that was gone charged with the bayonet. "Our orders are to hold our trenches at all costs," said the company officers to their men, and officers and privates fought as one. Companies held on in exposed trenches till every man was shot down, in order to make time for others to come up.

One private was operating his machine-gun despite heavy rifle fire directed against him.

His corporal told him to take cover or he would get hit. "What the hell are we here for but to get hit?" he demanded as he kept on. Shells were breaking off hugh branches of big trees that were falling across the roads and across the trenches. Battalions lost every officer, but there was always a non-commissioned officer or private to step in the place and take the lead.

Artillery officers brought up their guns until every horse was shot down. Canada started her first great battle of the war as a defeat, but a defeat which the world has acclaimed as greater glory than a victory.

When, after several days, reinforcements reached them, and the splendid remnants of the unshattered and unbroken Canadian battalions marched back into rest, the British came out to cheer them. Canada's right to a place in the British fighting ranks was now admitted.

The battle around St. Julien had a profound effect on the temper of the Canadians towards the enemy. Up to then most of the soldiers had been inclined to look upon the war in the light of a great sporting contest, as many of the American troops do as I write this in the spring of 1918. St. Julien brought a spirit of determined resentment. The introduction of poison gas and the brutality shown by the Germans towards many Canadian wounded prisoners who fell into their hands did this. German troops were seen slaying wounded and helpless men on the field. Prisoners who escaped or who got

back to our own lines in other ways subsequently related experiences which would at one time have seemed incredible as happening in war between civilised nations.

The narratives of two men will be enough. I repeat them as the men told them to me. These and similar accounts were soon familiar to every Canadian soldier. The first was told me by one of the Winnipeg Rifles—the "Little Black Devils"—who was struck by a shell fragment in the leg and a bone splintered. A Red Cross man bandaged him up, and he lay in the trenches for two days.

"At the end of two days," said he, "everyone saw that to remain any longer would mean that we would all be captured. The men who were left retired as far as a house somewhat to the rear. They carried all the wounded back with them, and they placed us in a cellar there. They could not do any more for us, for they had now to fight their way through the German lines.

"We lost sight of them, and then the Germans rushed up to the house. There were two wounded officers among us who knew a little German. They called out that we were all wounded men under the Red Cross. The Germans took no notice. They poked their rifle barrels through the windows and fired again and again among us. I expected every moment that a bomb would be hurled in the cellar, finishing us all at once. After a time the firing ceased and we were ordered out. We had to crawl or

drag ourselves out, or help one another as best we could. Broken legs, wounded bodies didn't matter. We had to get out.

"They made us parade in a row. There were no ambulances or stretchers. Some of them angrily asked what Canadians were doing taking part in this war. They ordered us to make our way to the dressing station some distance back. They threatened us with the points of their bayonets, and forced us on.

"My leg was broken and badly splintered. Two other men who could walk let me put my arms round their necks, and I travelled in this fashion, dragging myself along while I hung on to them. It seemed to me that I went for a mile or a mile and a half. You ask me how I did it? I do not know. You can do many things that seem impossible when you have to. At last I reached a stage when nothing could force me another yard. The Germans then let me and some others, who were as bad as I was, lie on the grass, while they went on with the remainder, and said they would send an ambulance for us.

"We were desperately thirsty. The only drink I had had for some time was water gathered from the pools formed by the rain, pools where the bodies of our dead lay, and where all the filth of the battle had run.

"My mouth was like ashes. Water! A young fellow lying by me was in much the same state as myself. Two German soldiers were

passing. He called to them, 'Water! Water!' One of the Germans turned on him with a snarl on his face: 'Wasser!' he said. 'Wasser, ja!' and he deliberately unslung his rifle, pointed it full at the young fellow, and shot him between the eyes." And the man from Winnipeg raised his thin hand again, and touched the centre of his forehead to show where the bullet had gone.

The second, Private McPhail, a giant from the West, a trapper and a pioneer able in the old days to drive his team of four across the rough foothills country and to guide his canoe down the fierce rapids of the Western rivers, was wounded on April 24th, a bullet cutting across his face. A little over four months afterwards I talked with him, hopelessly and permanently blind, a returned prisoner, in the garden of a Kentish convalescent hospital. His cheeks were still deep bitten with tan and strength was written on every limb. The man told me his tale in a deep rich voice. As he went on speaking comrade after comrade in khaki approached, creeping up silently, not to disturb him. The scene was a striking one. Picture to yourself that garden, with a throng of angry and indignant men, hushed and still, standing in a semicircle around the blinded giant who was facing them, yet not seeing them. It seemed to me for the moment to be like a page from one of the great Greek tragedies.

McPhail told me how his battalion, coming up on April 22nd, to hold the line after the

retirement of the Algerians, was attacked by poison gas. It fought for two days. On the 24th he was wounded. The Canadians had to retreat and could not carry back their wounded, and two hours afterwards the Germans, who had come up, found them. He was led to a field hospital, and remained there for eight days, receiving no attention. His wound was suppurating heavily, and there was not so much as a rag to wipe it with. Then he was taken to Iseghem.

"The treatment at Iseghem was brutal beyond description," he said. "They led me to an operating table, and put me on it. Three attendants and a sister held me down. The sister asked the doctor a question, and he answered in English for me to hear, 'No, I will not give an anæsthetic. Englishmen do not need any chloroform.' He turned up my eyelid in the roughest fashion and cut my eye out. He used a pair of scissors, they told me afterwards, and cut too far down, destroying the nerve of the other eye. It seemed to me as though he was trying to see how much agony he could inflict upon me. Suddenly I lost consciousness, and I remembered no more all that day nor all the next night."

"Isn't it fierce!" said the sergeant of the hospital, who had been carefully watching over the blind man, as McPhail paused for a moment. "Isn't it fierce!"

Do you imagine, you reader of this page, or does any German imagine, that the soldiers who

listened to that man's simple narrative, a narrative told quietly, unsensationally and without any desire to produce effect, would go into battle again with any feelings but those of determination to end once and for all the system which made possible things such as this? It was as though the Germans had wanted us to hate them and had tried to cultivate hatred among us.

Two other great battles near here stood out in the recollection of the Canadians. The first of these was the battle of the Craters at St. Eloi, in April, 1916—in some ways as terrible an experience as any the Canadians knew, because of the narrow frontage on which the fight was fought and of the mud. The second was the battle of Sanctuary Wood and Maple Copse, in June, 1916, when the Germans first captured a vital section of our front, clearing the way by an overwhelming surprise artillery attack, and then lost it after a great counter-attack, which ranks high in the records of Canadian arms. But the real test in the Ypres salient was not the big battles, but the daily fighting. Life there was in those old days a slow bleeding to death.

As you pass the railway bridge and enter the town through Dead Man's Corner, you note a roadway to the left. On one occasion in the spring days of 1915 this was a shambles. Our wounded had been brought back here during one of the final German attacks. By some means

the presence of our men had been betrayed to the enemy's artillery, and they opened a terrific shrapnel fire on the place. The whole road became one avenue of death, slippery and almost impassable from the mangled bodies of its victims.

Entering by the Rue d'Elverdinghe one passes the water works, with the broken water tower and the prison. Going towards the heart of the town, grim ruin is everywhere. The Rue d'Elverdinghe, when I first saw it, was as though its entire population had fled out of it, seized with sudden overmastering terror. When I last saw it, entire houses had disappeared. Nothing of their original shape remained now, scarce even bits of broken party walls. Further on there were still streets with something left. Here was a circular staircase hanging apparently on nothing. Here stood a bit of front wall, telling of a once gay boarding-house. Here was a bronze pillar-box, apparently untouched. The fine tower of the cathedral, which I first saw splendid amid destruction, is now almost level. Ypres is little more than a succession of rough roadways and crumbling walls.

There are degrees even in ruins. When I first visited Ypres it seemed to me that nothing could be more dreadful than the sight of row after row of broken houses. Not a house was whole. Many floors had collapsed; in some houses the fronts had been blown out; others had great shell holes through their walls; every

building showed signs of how the people had fled from it in haste and horror as the holocaust of German shells struck it with destruction. The houses, with their wretched interiors, often stained with blood, the reeking corners where the Sanitary Corps had not yet been able to clear up all the debris of human flesh, made a picture, gruesome, horrible beyond words. "I have seen the limits of destruction," I said.

But Ypres in the summer of 1915 was as nothing to the Ypres of a year later, just as that was a health resort compared with the Ypres of 1917. For over a year since my last visit the shells had continued to rain on it. Some days there were few and some days many; but every day some fell. At times the Germans in a fit of seeming fury plastered the place with "heavy stuff," and wrecked street after street. Then they concentrated on the tower of the cathedral, stripping side after side, until only one narrow broken part of the tower still stretched heavenwards. To pass the time they poured shell after shell on some one particular spot, until the very shell holes had been wiped out by other shell holes, and nothing but one broken confusion remained. Streets that I knew a year before, with their smashed interiors, were now nothing but little fragments of party wall, with crumbling ruins between.

There is a certain phantasy about the shell fire. The post-office still kept up a certain show of comparative completeness. Several pillar-boxes

stood unbroken. There were houses whose grinning fronts, hiding gaping emptiness within, still tried to preserve their air of dignity. There were lath-and-plaster dwelling-houses. There were streets of what, two years ago, were mediæval homes of weavers—houses with thick walls, big windows, and broad old wooden staircases, such as people of the Middle Ages delighted in. And now—sixteenth century solidly built home and twentieth century jim-crack villa had shared the common ruin.

The Cathedral, one could weep for it! The spectacles of the Halles made one too sorrowful for words. Some of us could remember the beautiful early Gothic building, with its exquisite glass work, its massive square belfry, its turrets, its statues, and its wonderful walls. It was a dream of beauty in stone. Some day we will take the skeletons of the walls that remain and try to erect another Cloth Hall there. But it will never be the same. The Cloth Hall has gone. The Cathedral has gone. The fourteenth century Town Hall has disappeared. The massive Church of St. Peter is as though an earthquake had struck it. The pretty public gardens with their fountains and statuary are blackened, broken ruins. Ypres, as many knew and as many loved it, will never come back again. A city that for centuries was a place of pilgrimage to the lovers of beauty, will now, in the years ahead, be a haunt for ghouls and sensation-

mongers seeking the extreme example of world horror and destruction.

We are at the Lille Gate now, to the south-east. Until the autumn of 1917 it was impossible to drive further than here. One must go on foot always. To-day one can ride many miles on.

We looked around at the city walls as we left them. Vauban planned them. They seemed to defy time, and they were merely pock-marked by the big shells that had struck them. We noticed the swans and cygnets swimming peacefully and gracefully in the moat. The mother swan sat on her eggs undisturbed by heavy shelling. Even when a shell burst quite close she did not stir. Her cygnets were hatched in the midst of a particularly heavy bombardment.

In the summer of 1916 the Lille road between the city and the front trenches was not considered healthy; it was a favourite target for the German artillery. One was always sure of a certain amount of excitement when you ventured out beyond the city.

I remember on one occasion discussing with an officer companion, as we left the Gate, whether we should walk along the road or through the rank grass-grown fields. It was a toss-up, and we decided on the fields. Happily for us we did, for the German artillerymen had seen us leave and had calculated that we were worth shelling. As we passed parallel with Shrapnel Corner there came a gentle whizzing through the air which steadily grew louder. Had

we been walking on the road it would just have got us. "Lucky for us we didn't take the main road!" said my officer friend. A few minutes later there came another shell. Had the first by chance missed us on the road, the second would certainly have got us.

Generally at that time three shells followed one another. We had to turn to the right to reach our destination, and we waited for the third shell so that the road would be clear. "Let us chance it," said some one at last. "If you hear another shell coming jump into a hole and lie flat," the captain commanded. "Never mind if it is full of water. Shells never strike the same place twice." There was no difficulty in finding a shell hole. The ground was thickly dotted with them as though they had been scattered out of a pepper-box. But no one would have said that shells never strike the same place twice a little later, for when the shell fire became more intense the very shell holes were eliminated by the insistent explosions.

There was a rattling sound overhead, harsh and regular like the click of a Lewis machine-gun. Somewhere overhead an aeroplane fight was going on. But search the skies as we would, we could not see it. Now our anti-aircraft guns opened, shell following shell very rapidly. Some sharp whistles were heard from near by. It was the familiar Ypres signal. "Enemy aircraft overhead—take shelter." You cannot take

shelter in the midst of an open field, but we knew the Taube would not waste bombs on us.

Here was Zillebeck and beyond it Maple Copse and Sanctuary Wood. Close by was Hill 60, the hill of a hundred fights. Further on were the parapets of the flat lands, and then St. Eloi, with the big craters of tragic and glorious memory. Beyond that, we would find ourselves in the comparatively quieter regions around Dickebusch.

The fight in those old days was threefold, overhead, underground, and in the trenches. Air fights were of daily occurrence, and the Taubes were ever seeking a chance to penetrate our lines. Mining was carried out on a big scale by both sides. On one occasion the Boches blew up a mine over 400 feet long, close to St. Eloi. We were ready for them; most of our men had been withdrawn from the danger point, and were ready to rush in afterwards before Fritz could make a footing.

We were almost surrounded by the enemy. They occupied the heights nearly all around, although fortunately we held some intermediate positions which prevented them from obtaining absolute fire command of the district. They could, however, sweep point after point within our lines with rifle and machine-gun fire. Their big guns got at us, not only from the front, but from the sides and almost from the rear. Nowhere in the salient were you free from shell fire. At any moment the Huns might send a

dozen or so of "heavy stuff" around where one was. The call to get under shelter from an approaching shell was so frequent that it became automatic to obey it. Everyone had narrow escapes. A "rum jar"—a monster shell with 200 lbs. of explosive—fell at the entrance to Jones's dug-out, and failed to explode. He had the cast-iron case emptied and was using it next day as a waste-paper basket. Brown missed his way going to X wood one morning, and so escaped being there when the Huns strafed it with 5.11's. A bit of shell penetrated Robinson's dug-out a short time ago, and just missed him. Everyone who was in the front of the salient for a day met these adventures. One was playing a game of tag with death all the time.

From Vlamertinghe to Sanctuary Wood you saw in those days no one but soldiers, save a rare and greatly privileged civilian visitor. All the old inhabitants had gone; all the houses that had not been levelled to the ground stood desolate. Here and there the ruins of a château, heavily protected by sandbags, were used as a field dressing station for the wounded. No Red Cross flag was flown over them. "We don't want to draw Boche fire," said the doctors grimly.

* * * *

One bitter question was asked throughout Canada after the great fighting around Ypres: Was it all worth while? For a year and a half our men had fought on, barely holding their own.

Even at Hooge, the miserable bit of useless soil which formed the village itself was no longer within our lines. Further south our front was practically as it had been—nothing gained. Eighteen months of heavy sacrifice, and what to show for it! Were the critics wrong who declared it folly to hold a position such as this, where the enemy could rain death down on us on three sides? Ought our commanders to have put their pride in their pockets and fallen back?

Events since those early autumn days of 1916 have given their answer to the question. The great advance a year later from Ypres and from Messines showed the value of the salient. But few men who lived in Ypres during the worst days failed to realise that this was not a matter for argument. There was no question with them as to whether we should hold it or not. We did hold it.

The roads approaching our positions were shell torn and broken in all manner of ways. Every here and there you came on a collection of graves, each with its neat cross over it, and all the crosses carefully lettered, many of them with not one, but many names on it. West Kents and the "Little Black Devils" of Winnipeg, Yorkshire Light Infantry and Royal Scots, Irish Guards and the Queen's Own of Toronto, lie side by side. Alas! I cannot say peacefully, for even the graves are not spared by the falling shells.

Not worth while! Not worth while to hold the graves of thousands of our brothers lying

here! Not worth while to keep the last resting places of Canadians and British from enemy hands! Don't tell the soldier it is not worth while, or his reply to you may be more forcible than polite. There was Zonnebecke, with its broken houses, the trenches facing Hooge, the beautiful lake around which one loved to sit on a hot summer's day when it was possible to get away, the remnants of the railway line; further north were the places that Canada will one day buy to make into a national memorial, the fields around St. Julien, where Canada proved at great price her nationhood.

For every Canadian those earlier months around Ypres were a time of supreme test. There were easier days in the trenches at Kemmel, at Petit Doub, and in Plug Street; then you sometimes enjoyed almost a holiday experience. You knew within reason when the enemy were going to shoot, and you could make your preparations accordingly. But, further north, it was day and night work, ever under fire, ever enfiladed, never able to walk a mile without coming at some point under the enemy guns, never able to sleep when at the front without knowing that as likely as not bombardment or gas attack would rouse one. Young men lost their youth. "No man returns from Ypres," the Germans have a saying. We might have said "No man returns from Ypres the same as he entered it." For every man who has been there for long sees life through different eyes.

It was not an easy place to hold. It was not a pleasant place to hold. It was not a cheap place to hold. But the surrender of this little town would have meant inevitably an entire alteration in the face of the northern war. It would have involved the entire retirement of the Belgian Army from its northern position. Once the Yser Canal to the north of Ypres was turned, the whole of the Belgian position up to Nieuport and the sea would inevitably have gone. Let the Germans push beyond Ypres, nothing could have prevented them pressing on first to Dunkirk and then beyond. Ypres was and is essentially the key to Calais, and once it was taken we would have found the German armies turning the entire flank of the Allied position. Had the Canadians not held Ypres and our First Division not saved the day at Ypres in April, 1915, there would have been no battle of the Somme, for the British armies would then have been fighting their way for a foothold on northern French soil. And "fat Bertha"—Germany's darling gun—from the white cliffs above Sangaate, might have been dropping its 42 c.m. shells into the villas of Folkestone and the forts and working-class streets of Dover.

Worth while! If ever a thing has been worth while in this war it was the defence of Ypres. If ever there could be said to have been a vital portion of the war, it was the holding of this ancient Flemish capital. Every Canadian may

be proud that Canada had her share, and a great share in it. For here Canada helped to save Europe.

* * * *

Do you wonder that, as the troops marched back on the October days of 1917, and looked afresh on the ruined cathedral, the broken houses, many had solemn memories. Old comrades were recalled, old recollections of brave men revived.

The walls of Ypres are haunted with memories, glorious, tragic and terrible, of our brothers and sons. One has felt at times, sitting amidst the gloom illumined only by the flash of shells and by the flares, that the ghosts of our dead might arise—in their many, many thousands—might confront us and indict us, demanding of us if humanity had nothing better to do with the best of its sons than to smash them and to slay them around the grey walls of this old city. And yet their life blood has saved civilisation and freedom, which are worth even this high price.

12. HEINIE HAS A SURPRISE

A GLANCE at a contour map of Belgium will show that the northern part of the country is largely dominated by a big ridge which, starting close to Messines in the south, continues northward, culminating in a series of spurs and ridges to the east of the village of Passchendaele, and from there tapering off towards

the coast. In Napoleon's days it was an axiom that the army which controlled Passchendaele and Houthulst Forest dominated northern Belgium. Modern conditions of war have modified this, but it is still true that the army holding Passchendaele commands immense sections of the country east and west. From the top of the ridge you can, on fine days, see the belfries of Bruges.

The big autumn offensive of the British Army, which had started so splendidly with the capture of Messines Ridge and with the advance from Ypres, had halted—partly because of very unfavourable weather conditions which turned Flanders into a quagmire, and partly because of the enormous strength of the German defences, particularly of the concrete emplacements for machine-guns and artillery. In October the British had received some nasty set-backs; costly attacks on some of the northern sections of the ridge had either wholly failed or been only partial successes. Passchendaele Ridge itself had, in particular, defied our armies time after time. British troops had attacked it, and they had even got to the ridge, but had been unable to hold it. It was at Passchendaele that the Canadians were now called upon to make the final and crowning effort. Winter was approaching, time was short, and unless we seized it soon, there could be no moving forward until the spring. To the older Canadians, the men who had been present with the First

Division at the second battle of Ypres, the new field of war was of special interest, for the lines of the British Army were, at one point, the very ones held by the Canadians on the disastrous day of St. Julien, in April, 1916.

The Canadians came up from Mons in mid-October, and the Third and Fourth Divisions took over part of the line on October 20. The country beyond Ypres, the long stretch of low-lands running out to the Passchendaele Ridge, was a field of muddy desolation, one vast quag-mire of shell holes and the débris of war. It had been possible to do very little work on it since we had captured this district a few weeks earlier. Roads were practically non-existent. Much of our artillery had to fight in the open. There was no time to build gun emplacements with adequate protection. The Germans had every spot registered, and could keep the whole district under continual shell fire.

General Currie concentrated his strength, dur-ing the few days before the battle, on improving his means of transit. Armies of men were set to work road-making—first, making rough foundations and then placing a double line of planks right across the mud; the famous Cana-dian roads which had done such good service at Vimy and elsewhere. The light railway which had been built was strengthened and extended. Day and night, under the German fire, the road-makers continued building their great avenues. Waggons might smash and platoons be wiped

out; the wreckage would be thrown aside, fresh waggons would come, and fresh men set to work. Where the roads ended, pack mules went on, lines of them continuously making their way towards the trenches, loaded with shells and material. Where the pack mules could go no further, men took up the burdens. And so during one crowded week fighting material of all kinds was rushed up. Meanwhile the troops in the front trenches, by raids, scouting and Indian work, were learning all they could of the enemy positions, and our aeroplanes were at every opportunity photographing the German lines.

The Canadian Army was asked to do an almost impossible task, and it is well that the difficulties which confronted it should be realised. The Germans were able to concentrate superior gun strength at this point. During the middle of the battle the attacking army was actually inferior in guns to the defending one. Happily this inequality was more than accounted for by the superior handling of the Canadian guns. Our batteries suffered very heavily, fighting in the open. Despite their losses they were able to clear a way for our offensive, and time after time to smash German counter-offensives before they had reached our lines. It was difficult to get the guns in position, owing to the shell holes, and guns had to be laid on sandbags in shell holes to obtain a platform.

Another difficulty of the Canadians came from the momentary superiority in strength—a

superiority shortly afterwards to be changed to marked inferiority—of German aircraft. The Germans were able right through the engagement to use their aircraft as a strong offensive weapon. They could come over our lines in daylight, sailing at three heights—the bombing machines at the bottom, the fighting planes double-decked above them. Night after night fleets of German planes attacked in relays positions which they believed were being held by us. The ruins of Ypres were one particular target, and on one night alone they dropped close on a thousand bombs in and around Ypres. Poperinghe, close behind, was also continually attacked. The British airmen, be it said, attacked in turn behind the German lines. Individual airmen assured me that they were inflicting far more damage than the Germans on us, but there seemed to be at this stage an absence of effective fighting planes to meet the German raiders. British airmen showed particular gallantry in observation work, and on the first day of the battle, when rain and fog made it difficult to see what was going on below, our young airmen swooped down to within two hundred feet of the ground, some of them having their machines wrecked in doing so.

The German position was very strong. Their line consisted of a series of ridges, hogs'-backs and spurs. To a depth of from a mile to a mile and a half it was made up of ridge after ridge

and spur after spur, interspersed with copses and valleys.

Our line ran from the old railway near Defe Crossing on the right to Wallemolen on the left, a distance, roughly, of about three thousand yards. The central point for the first day's attack was Bellevue Spur with Wolf Copse on the left of it and Dad Trench to the right. At every commanding point of the German position "pill-boxes" and "dreadnoughts"—concrete emplacements in which men, guns and machine-guns had been placed—had been built. The machine-gun forts varied in size, holding, some one, and some several machine-guns. Several of them presented no direct surface exits, but were entered by tunnels opening up several hundreds of yards behind. When attacking troops reached these machine-gun forts, there was no way in which they could get in, while the troops within were well protected and could fight with every advantage on their side.

In addition to these small structures there were great concrete huts, twelve by eighteen feet or larger, where troops took cover during our barrage, emerging as soon as it lifted, pouring out into the shell holes with their machine-guns to fire on our advancing men. These huts were often five feet thick with reinforced concrete. They seemed at times more like titanic concrete blocks, out of which small places had been scooped for men to shelter in. Many were impervious save from a direct hit. Had there

been time it would have been possible to bring sustained and continuous shell fire against them when the repeated vibrations and the fumes from the heavy shells would have made them practically uninhabitable. But the few days available scarcely permitted this. Even as it was, however, our artillery succeeded in smashing some of the huts and killing the troops inside them before the first advance.

Most of the men in the Canadian ranks scoffed, before the battle began, at the "pill-boxes." "We will kill Heinie in his little funk-hole like a rat in a trap," they said.

The German plan of defence had undergone a big development since the spring. Trench warfare had given place to position warfare. In place of having definite lines of trenches which could be marked and wiped out by our artillery, the Germans fought over each area from shell hole to shell hole. The trench was practically nothing, the general position was everything. And the men, when they came to the open from their concrete emplacements with their machine-guns, did not so much make for trenches as for scattered shell holes. This, of course, added to the problem of attack, because the defending forces could no longer be localised.

But the greatest difficulty of all was the mud. The Canadians had known what mud was on the Somme and at Vimy, but the valleys and lowlands around Passchendaele surpassed everything. It is difficult to convey what this mud

meant to the fighting troops. In some places men had to wade through boglands holding their rifles and munitions above their heads, while the enemy were firing at them. In other parts, where men fell and died in storming German positions, their bodies disappeared after a time, being slowly but surely sucked in under the earth. Nature itself provided their burial.

The Germans now held their front lines in great strength. In the previous winter their policy had been to hold the front line lightly in order to avoid losses from our artillery fire, and then to pour up supports when our attack began. The German Staff, however, found by experience that they lost so many men in recovering ground which had been taken from their weak front lines, that they reverted to the policy of putting abundant good troops in front and keeping them there.

The German Army was in a very different temper from what it had been in the spring. Then it was down-hearted, now it was triumphant. The victories in Italy and the defeat of Russia had sent a new spirit of confidence through their ranks. This was evident in the fighting. The men fought hard, and in many cases stood up to our troops better than they had ever done before. The very prisoners came into our lines, in many cases, not as cowed and broken men, but with an air of almost insolent superiority. They had met with a little misfortune, their manner seemed to say, but this

would soon be put right. I had the opportunity of talking with various groups of prisoners. The contrast between their manner then and the manner of the German prisoners at Vimy was amazing.

Our first attack was made shortly before dawn on Friday, October 26. The honour of opening the attack was given to the Third and Fourth Divisions. The 46th Battalion was on the right, supported by the 50th. Next to it was an Ontario battalion, the 58th, whose objective was the Dad Trench. Then came the 43rd, the Camerons, attacking the formidable Bellevue Spur. On our extreme left the 4th C.M.R.'s advanced through Wolf Copse, attempting to encircle the Spur.

The advance was part of a big attack by the British and French on the Flanders front. The weather had promised to be ideal, for, during two days previously, a fine, dry wind had swept over the country. Unfortunately, shortly before the start, a heavy rainstorm began, making the mud at its worst and rendering observation very difficult.

Our artillery opened its barrage, putting up a heavy concentrated fire and smashing everything that could be smashed. Immediately the barrage lifted our advance began. The C.M.R.'s were greatly helped by the brilliant work of their trench gunners, who had carried their Stokes guns through the night across seemingly impassable land. They lay crouching low in a

position where, had the Germans suspected their presence, they could have been quickly annihilated. They could not stand up even to fire, for they would have been immediately shot down. Lying in the mud, they passed their shells over their heads into the mouths of the guns. Before the German machine-gunners had realised where they were, they were raining fire on them.

The troops engaged in the direct attack on the spur at once found themselves up against a line of three concrete buildings just below the crest of the hill. One of these had been smashed up by our artillery, and the bodies of the dead Germans could be seen lying inside it. The second was somewhat damaged, and the third practically intact.

Moving beyond these three "pill-boxes," after they had captured them, the Camerons advanced in two parties. The men to the right reached a forward position on the spur. They could not see far because of the mist, and their runners found it difficult to obtain any information. Scouts sent out to the right, came back with the report that the Canadian troops which had attacked Dad Trench had been driven right back. Word came from the left that the little group there were all killed. The officer in charge, after holding on for some time, reluctantly gave orders to fall back, to save his men being wounded and all captured.

The Ontario troops which had moved up against Dad Trench had been hindered by the difficult ground, had been caught by enfilading fire from skillfully planted German concrete positions, and had been unable to make any progress. Apparently they were unable to keep up with their barrage on account of the mud. They at last reached the very edge of the trench when the Germans counter-attacked. A confused man-to-man fight went on around the shell holes. Officers and men, badly wounded, refused to go back to have their wounds dressed, but continued fighting. In spite of all the heroism of the men, the majority of the battalion were slowly, inexorably forced back almost to where they had started from. Three officers, however, contrived to remain quite forward holding on to the very edge of the trench. One of them, Lieutenant S. Clarke, captured sixty-three prisoners in this first advance.

It seemed that the Canadians' attack had failed. The left wing was facing desperate resistance, and the C.M.R.'s were in a critical position owing to heavy losses and the exposure of their flanks, and could not reach their final objective. To our right the 46th had gone forward well, but the mud caked and jambed their rifles and machine-guns. Along most of our lines the men were practically back in their trenches. Our losses had been heavy, and apparently we had little to show for them. It was a gloomy hour, and the gloom spread far

back beyond the fighting trenches, for ill news travels apace.

When things seemed at their blackest, a young Cameronian Highlander, Bobby Shankland, a lieutenant who had taken part in the advance, rushed into the headquarters of the battalion. He was wounded, and his clothes were torn with bullets. One bullet had cut his gas mask chamber; a second had penetrated his pocket and a third had struck him on his back, going through a tin of fudge (*Anglicé*, sweets) which he had placed there, and causing a slight surface wound.

"I have fifty men on top of the ridge," he said. "We command the entire position. Give me reinforcements—I can take them up over a dead bit of the hill."

The change that came over everyone was like a transformation scene.

What had happened was this. When the Cameronians on the left of the spur got past the concrete blockhouses, they found themselves faced a little further on by two partially complete German strong points. After wiping every German out they found themselves on the very top of the spur, on a commanding point which dominated a considerable distance around. The Cameronians, twenty men and with one machine-gun, could not see how favourably they were placed because of the mist. They were in some disorder, for the fighting around the strong points had been hard and it had been individual

fighting, each man going for every German in sight as best he could. They were joined by Shankland, who rallied them. They used the machine-gun until it jambed. Some other men came up with another machine-gun; and in the end there were about fifty men. Slightly to their right Lieutenant Galt had made the top with four men. This little party sat down tight. Shankland directed his infantry and machine-guns towards the German positions. They shot down every German soldier as soon as he showed himself. The Germans, dazed by the heavy artillery punishment they had suffered, and taxed to the utmost by the hand-to-hand fighting which had gone on all along the line, did not realise how few men there were on the top of the spur. All they knew was that whenever one of them showed himself a bullet got him. Time after time the battle for the spur swayed to and fro, and time after time the Germans attacked and time after time they were driven back.

I saw many of the men engaged in the fighting shortly afterwards, but not Shankland, as he had already been sent back to England. It was difficult to obtain any clear detailed account of the fighting from them for the whole thing was like a nightmare.

"I have never witnessed such fighting before," said one of them who had been through many battles. All they knew was that they were holding on in the mist expecting reinforcements

every moment and determined to hold on till reinforcements came. Gradually the strength of their position became evident. How long they fought they could not tell. They tried to estimate, but they were taking no notice of time during those hours. After a time—actually about four hours—Shankland determined to plunge down to get back to our own lines and to bring up fresh men.

During the summer the British authorities had been more and more urging on their men the superiority of the rifle and the bayonet over the bomb. The hand grenade had become a sort of fetish with the army. Men went into battle even as late as Vimy, laden with it, and when the supply of bombs was exhausted, runners would plunge back through the enemy barrage for more. Army instructors tell one tale—a true tale, I believe—of the soldier who followed a solitary German for half a mile at a distance of three hundred yards, trying to get up to him to bomb him, forgetting altogether that he had a rifle with which he could shoot him. At Passchendaele the men had been taught to rely almost wholly on the rifle, and the hand grenade was very little used. Bellevue Spur showed afresh what the rifle could do in the hands of trained men.

The Germans had tried to enfilade the spur. One company in particular had dribbled around in little parties, intending to form up and to advance from around the hill. These little

parties were unable to see each other after they had passed a certain point. Our men shot them in detail as they came along. Finally the oberlieutenant, accompanied by his sergeant-major and two runners, came on to take command. To their surprise their men were not in waiting. One of the runners was shot, and the officer, the sergeant and the other runner were captured. The young German officer was very cool and very polite. His exalted manners greatly impressed his captors. When he learnt that he had been taken by the Canadians, he expressed the greatest interest. He spoke English fluently, and said that he knew Toronto well, having lived there some time. He made kindly enquiries about many Toronto citizens, and then he took out his cigarette case.

"Have I your permission?" he asked his captors, with a polite inclination of the head, and then he lit up quietly. "I have never seen such a cool card," said one man. "You might have thought that he was a great prince dealing kindly and affably with his subjects." But the Canadians rather liked him for his coolness and his pluck.

Immediately Shankland's news was known a fresh effort was made. The 52nd Battalion had come up. Part of it with remnants of the 43rd started a fresh attack on Dad Trench. Part pushed up and very successfully filled a gap between two brigades. Strong reinforcements moved up the hill to strengthen the little force

on the spur top. The troops that had been fighting for Wolf Copse, some of them under very heavy machine-gun fire, continued around the spur. The troops to the right and the troops to the left, gradually moving round, had come together on the other side of the spur. There was still very heavy fighting around numerous German emplacements. The Canadians had almost to dig the enemy out, so firmly were they planted in. The fighting went on all day and continued into the night. But in the end Bellevue Spur was ours, Dad Trench was in our hands, and the whole line of the first day's objective was taken and formed our new front about 950 yards inside the enemy's front line. Shankland obtained the V.C. for his work that day. He deserved it, for, but for him, the result of the Passchendaele fight would have been very different. The fate of the battle often depends not on the mass of men who fight well, but on the exceptional deed of some exceptional man.

Bellevue Spur was ours, but Bellevue Spur was only the first step of the battle. The fight for Passchendaele had been mapped out in three stages. The next attack was to take us to the edge of the village, and the final one beyond it. These were left for later days.

13. DEAD MAN'S CORNER

WHEN my friends of a pioneer battalion invited me to spend the night with them in

their cellar among the ruins, I accepted eagerly. Where these ruins were I suppose I must not say, except that they were somewhere in the field of battle behind Passchendaele. The district bore a sinister name, "Dead Man's Corner," familiar to every man who knows the Flanders front.

I had a surprise on reaching the cellar. Passing through a scene of devastation as terrible as anything to be witnessed in this war, I reached a clear passage amid the wreckage. A turn at the end of it brought me to a sand-bagged hole in the ground. Going down the steps, I found myself in an underground chamber that seemed almost to belong to another world than this world of ruin.

The cellar walls had been draped with brown sacking, and carefully selected pictures from magazines fastened on them. In one corner was an old fireplace with a wood fire cheerfully burning in it. Some furniture had been saved from houses in the neighbourhood, a table, a few chairs and a sideboard. The plain low-bricked ceiling was arched. There were silver candlesticks—one of the party had bought them as a great treasure a little while before.

The cellar was the last word in the newest art, and I thought to myself how Mr. Roger Fry and the London Group of painters would have delighted in it.

My old friends welcomed me. "You've brought good luck," declared one. "With this

mist the Hun planes can't come over to-night, so we will have no bombing and no shelling. Stay for a fortnight."

The little cellar was full of activity. In other cellars beyond clerks were busy at telephone and typewriter. Officers were coming and going with reports or waiting for instructions. A battalion commander has no easy time, particularly at the fighting front. Visitors arrived all the time during the evening. Here were two airmen with great tales to tell of raids on the German lines. Here was a padre, fresh from making his home for many days as one of twenty men in an underground shelter big enough for only three. He had stayed there so as to be at the nearest possible point for tending the wounded. He had much to say of the courage of the lads he had lived among. As for the dug-out that he had left, he declared that it reeked with every odour except the odour of sanctity.

What does a pioneer battalion do? Many people have the idea that it is a kind of non-combatant corps which acts as the servant of the fighting battalions. It is totally wrong. The pioneers are the handy men of the army. By the nature of their work they are thrown in the very hottest parts of the line. They have to do all kinds of things, sometimes fight, sometimes labour day after day under heavy fire, enduring, losing, seeing their comrades killed around them, unable to hit back because their

work at the time is not to fight, but to build trenches, to lay roads, or to prepare in other ways for the battle.

During the previous week I had seen these pioneers at work in some of the most unhealthy parts of the line, road building, working in spots where smashed cars and dead mules and broken men told their tale of what was happening all the time. Four days previously, in the great battle of October 30th, the battalion had gone into the front fighting line as stretcher-bearers. Now the stretcher-bearer has to expose himself hour after hour to the enemy fire. He cannot think of sheltering himself. His work is to aid the wounded. Very often—although fortunately not always—the Germans take a delight in potting at him, particularly when he is carrying wounded back. Even if he is not potted at he is under shell fire all the time. These pioneers started out at half-past three in the morning, reaching the line of advance at five. They worked continuously till half-past six at night, seeking out and carrying wounded all the time. Then, when it was found that there were still more wounded to be brought in some of them remained at work all night long.

The pioneer is, as I said before, the handy man of the army. It is his business to do whatever wants doing, from laying wire entanglements under the nose of the German machine-guns, to building a railway. My friends had

been busy on all these things. One company had worked at laying a light railway; another company had dug a regimental aid post. Away up in the lines they had prepared dug-outs, elaborate shell-proof structures. They had built tunnels. They had run trenches out right into the heart of No Man's Land itself. They had bath-matted long roads. They had hurried forward supplies. They had been gassed and shelled and bombed so many times that they had ceased to keep account of them. Only the night before Gothas had come over and had dropped dozens of bombs immediately around them.

Their work had been neither easy nor cheap. It is not my business to let Fritz know how many of his shells got home, but if anyone imagines that a pioneer battalion can work in a battle without heavy cost in life, then he knows very little about war.

Dinner over, we sat in our cellar talking over things, exchanging experiences of the battle which had now nearly completed its second stage and was soon to enter its third. We talked of home, of old friends and old ways. We forgot the guns barking outside. We forgot in the candlelight of that sunken roof that we were in one of the most dreadful spots in the world, a spot where probably more lives have been lost than in any other area of similar size on earth, a spot where ruin, death and desolation walk at large.

Our cellar was neither bomb proof nor shell proof. We went out of it to look around, and to move on to our sleeping room, another little underground cell close by. "You have brought us luck," the adjutant repeated. "Fritz is leaving us alone to-night." I noticed that the officers lay down clad, ready to jump up at a moment's notice to go out if they were called on.

Some time during the night I started up. An immense burst almost deafened me. The cellar shook, and then came a rattle of falling things above. There came a moment's pause, and then a voice asked quietly, "Has anyone got a light?"

A German shell had burst just outside. A miss is as good as a mile, and no damage had been done. "They have been shelling us for some time," someone told me, "but you have been sleeping all through it."

There was to be no more sleep, however. The sound of the shelling grew louder and louder all the way along the front. In our modest home we were receiving special attention. Quite apart from the shells that fell near us, it was evident that in the language of official reports, "the enemy were showing considerable artillery activity."

At half-past five, the orderly-room clerk came with his message on the happenings of the night and the divisional orders for the day. The Germans were heavily shelling the roads beyond

us, and there was to be no work on them as yet that morning.

"You had better stay here a little time longer," said the colonel. "Wait till the guns quiet down, and then you will be able to get off." But there could be no waiting that morning, for my car was already making its way up to take me to another part of the line.

14. VICTORY

THE second great battle for Passchendaele Ridge began early on the morning of October 31, when we again took all our objectives and went beyond them, retaining most of the line from Vapour Farm to Vienna Cottage, despite repeated enemy counter-attacks flung against us with the utmost fury and with an utter disregard of the sacrifice of life involved. Our total advance now reached about 1,200 yards at the widest point, tapering somewhat on either flank. Our men finished the day entrenched on the outskirts of Passchendaele village. Twelve hundred yards advance on a front line of a little over three thousand yards may seem little for the tremendous effort put forward, and men who recalled how at Vimy we were able to count our progress by miles, spoke gloomily of what had been done. But anyone who understood the nature of the German defences and saw the character of the country was bound to acknowledge that the accomplishment had been rarely equalled in this war.

Three battalions of the Twelfth Brigade, the 72nd, 78th and 85th, on the right, were very successful, capturing Crest Farm by 6.45 a.m. The 49th and the "Princess Pats," who formed the centre, met with fierce opposition and suffered heavy casualties. Despite all resistance they captured the whole line of enemy positions facing them. To the left was one battalion of the Eighth Brigade, the 5th C.M.R.'s. These pushed on so rapidly that they soon left the troops on either side of them to the rear. The famous Imperial battalion, the Artists, which was attacking at the same time to the left of the Canadians, was only able to get forward 150 yards, and the 49th, to the right of the C.M.R.'s, were being kept back by fierce opposition. This exposed either flank of the C.M.R.'s, and they suffered heavily. But they held on.

The Germans evidently forecasted that we were about to strike again, for they kept up a heavy fire of high explosive shells over a considerable part of the front during the night, but the Canadian troops were well entrenched; they were working around the "dreadnoughts" and "pill-boxes," which they had captured from the Germans a few days before. Unfortunately, the exits of these "pill-boxes," where they had direct exits, were at the rear, thus affording the minimum of protection from German artillery.

The task on the Tuesday was to push beyond the line of Bellevue Spur, Wolf Copse, and Dad Trench, to occupy completely the short spur to

the left and to push up to the outskirts of Passchendaele village. The Germans had many concrete blockhouses here, particularly around Meetcheele Spur. The mud on the lowlands proved again exceedingly trying.

The enemy fire was so heavy during the night that our men, moving out into their jumping-off place, dug themselves into a narrow trench running from shell hole to shell hole. Our barrage opened shortly before daylight. Within five minutes the enemy replied with tremendous concentrated fire which seemed to make all that had gone before it as nothing. Their rain of shells swept a broad swathe between our advancing battalions and their headquarters, making it difficult to maintain communications. Yet the runners, usually men who had been slightly wounded in the earlier fighting, went quickly and unhesitatingly to and fro. At point after point that day it was found that the Germans stood firm to the last, waiting with cylindrical sticks against our bayonet charges. It was neither an easy nor a cheap advance.

The day opened fine with a blood-red sky, but clouds soon gathered and a fierce penetrating rain and cold searching air made the day by noon uncomfortable.

There was very heavy fighting on some particular points, notably on Meetcheele Spur, which had to be carried at the point of the bayonet in face of machine-gun fire, and at Crest Farm, where our men had to get at grips

with the bayonet. The Germans, recognising the importance of the coming attack, had concentrated many troops, including Bavarians and Prussian Guard Reserves, while their artillery seemed to grow stronger each day. At this stage they were using high explosives more freely than I have known them do at any time in this war.

By about eight in the morning practically the whole of our objectives had been carried, with the exception of one very strong bunch of "pill-boxes" fronting Gouldberg. These were left till later in the day, when they, too, were taken.

I would like, if I could, to depict the battle-field as it was that day. Imagine the enemy shells and the enemy aeroplanes seeking their victims during the night, not alone on the front lines, but twelve and fifteen miles further back. The roads along which the enemy believed our troops must travel were searched continually by shell fire. The fields around were under a constant rain of high explosives. A transport waggon would be caught here, a bit of roadway torn up there, an ambulance blown to bits somewhere else.

The noise three miles behind the front was so deafening during the height of the engagement that you could not even hear the enemy shells approaching; all you knew of them was when they burst—big, ugly, black masses, throwing still darker volumes in the sky. I have met men who maintain that it is more dangerous

to be a couple of miles behind the front lines than in the advance itself. Do not believe them. Two miles behind you may be hit, but the chances are that you will not. When you go over the top, facing machine-guns and cylindrical sticks, the chances are against your getting through without some kind of damage, great or small.

Here is the front itself, a long, gloomy ridge, where black mud and great columns of débris are constantly being flung into the air. The soldiers at first cursed the mud, but after a time they realised that they had reason to bless it, for the deep mud prevented innumerable German shells from bursting and saved thousands of lives. As the wind gathered force the aeroplanes that had been manœuvring above, found it more and more difficult to keep control. We could see the monster tri-planes blowing furiously this way and that, tacking and twisting, looking as though every moment they would be flung down among us.

Here in front, in the slithering, bog-like mud the men fell. Lucky were they when they were able to scramble, or hobble, or stagger to the casualty clearing station or the field ambulances, for perhaps the most awful and horrible experience in war is for a wounded man, unable to move, to have to lie hour after hour with shells bursting around, knowing that he cannot avoid them, with nothing to do but think of his position, with vitality lowered by loss of blood

and by shock, expecting—expecting—expecting! Men who would face a nest of machine-gun emplacements single-handed without a quiver, find their hearts drop when they are waiting in this fashion.

Along the roads leading up to the front one set of men were at work repairing the damage caused by the enemy shells. Transport waggons and ambulances were creeping up as near to the front as possible in a dense line like a block of traffic in Piccadilly. Parties of stretcher-bearers, whole companies of them, one after the other, were marching to their places.

These stretcher-bearers had anything but an easy time. They were largely men from labour battalions. Many of them had started early in the day and would not finish that night. They revealed a courage as remarkable as I have known. They moved amidst the heavy shell-fire, never hesitating. Many were killed and wounded. On the previous Friday the Germans had taken great pleasure in sniping at them, particularly when carrying wounded back, deliberately shelling places where they thought the stretcher-bearers would have to go. At one spot two stretcher-bearers had just been killed before I reached it.

Away up at the front, still well behind the actual fighting lines you came on the field dressing station, where the wounded who had been hastily bandaged up further ahead, were brought by the stretcher-bearers on their way

to the ambulances and to the light rail transports behind. Here was a small sand-bagged dug-out, scarcely high enough to stand upright in. It was almost impossible to hear oneself speak inside owing to the noise of the firing from our own guns and the bursts of the explosions of the German shells around. Immediately adjoining this was a Y.M.C.A. advanced post. This was only one of a number of advanced posts maintained by the Y.M.C.A. all over the battle front. These, with the chaplains' services, did most admirable work. Their business was to supply hot cocoa and biscuits both for wounded and stretcher-bearers. The Y.M.C.A. post was a mere shack made of sacking. It did not profess to give any shelter from shell fire. I doubt if it would have protected the man in it from a small shell fragment. Here, however, day and night, the young Y.M.C.A. men kept on. They had to plant their stations at the most dangerous points of the line because here was where their presence was most necessary.

It was good to see the tender way in which the bearers handled the wounded, lifting their heads as gently as women could, holding the hot drinks to their lips. Here one came against the raw actualities of war. The pools formed by the rain ran red here, red from the life blood of the men resting in the stretchers. Some lay still, their faces ghastly, yellow, their eyes closed, unconscious. Some faces were growing grey. Those who were conscious smiled

and spoke cheerfully. But most of them lay apathetic, unseeing and unhearing. The doctors had, I imagine, given them good doses of morphia before sending them down the line.

A second party of wounded were coming along the road. These were the slightly wounded men who had been hastily bandaged up and sent to find their way as well as they could to the rear.

Walking wounded are often pessimistic. Why, I do not know, except that they have had rather a nasty jolt and have had to struggle to the point of exhaustion pulling themselves along. Talk with wounded walking cases and you will get the idea, if you are a newcomer, that the battle has gone against us. They will tell how this company has been wiped out by machine-gun fire, how another was enfiladed, and so on, until one expects to hear the words: "I am the only survivor of our battalion."

The padres helped valiantly in caring for the wounded. The doctors at the field dressing stations were working at tremendous speed. Even while counter-attack followed counter-attack, the work of relief went on. By night both sides were facing each other with a comparatively short distance between. The Germans sent out their bearers, we sent ours. At first the snipers were active and the guns continued their fire, and then an agreement, understood or expressed, I know not which, was arrived at, and, for a time, the bearer parties

worked in comparative safety. The battalion officers of the Princess Pats, who had had a very heavy and costly day, volunteered to go out themselves and seek their men lying in the mud. Cooks and orderlies and a little group of men serving round the headquarters, not to be outdone by their officers, said that they would go, too.

Picture the scene that night, the parties of men groping almost blindly along, seeking for what they could find. English and German relief parties came into touch. There are moments when the misery and agony of war break down even the barriers we ourselves have built. The Germans had gathered up many of our wounded, and we had many of theirs. Some merciful soul suggested an exchange, and at midnight, in the darkness, the men were passed over, the Germans to their countrymen, the Canadian wounded to theirs.

Here we are back at the field dressing station. There has come a slack moment. The doctor in charge drops his professional manner and reveals himself as an old friend from somewhere in Ontario. "How is the election going?" he asks. "What about the politicians?" and he gives one two minutes' talk about the politicians. It's difficult to follow all that he is saying, for one is tired now and the thunder of the guns outside has begun anew, and their brief orations seem to drown the voice. One can just catch that he is managing to pack away in very

concise speech the usual soldier's opinion of politicians.

Here we are back at a point where the narrow gauge railway has been pushed up by the engineers. The rails have been laid during the battle itself. Trolleys are waiting on which wounded can be placed. Lend a hand here. This big soldier, shot in the foot and with his foot bandaged, is trying to make his way alone with a stick across the rough ground. Give him a hand and a shoulder. This poor beggar is parching for a drink. You need never be idle at this spot while the battle is on.

When the wounded are put into the trolleys their worst troubles are over, for careful as the stretcher-bearers are along the rough roads, they cannot rival the smoothness of the trolley.

A little further back the ambulances are waiting. They have come up to here over roads searched by very heavy shell fire. A certain number of them will be knocked out before the night is over, for ambulance driving on a battle-field is no sinecure. The stretcher-bearers who have come thus far place their stretchers on the ground on as dry a part as possible. A little more or less mud does not matter now. They move each man on the ambulance stretchers, slip the stretchers into their places, and an hour or so hence, if fortune holds good, the wounded will be down beyond the scene of battle, at Vlamertinghe or Poperinghe or further back still. They will be down in the

region of clean beds, warm wards and comforts. Further back, at the other side of Ypres, you can see great hospital trains standing in the sidings—trains beautifully fitted up, looking scrupulously clean and fresh, I might almost say dainty. They take their loads to the coast, and some of these wounded in the morning cross the Channel next day on their way to Blighty.

I sympathise with the walking wounded cases. The comfortable ambulances are not, as a rule, for them. I will not soon forget one dreadful party of them that had gathered at a point some way down the lines. Here they were hastily looked over afresh—hastily, not because anyone wanted to be hasty with them, but because where there were so many to deal with haste was necessary. Men shot in the arms were leading others injured in the legs, leaning on their shoulders as they moved back. One man with face so bandaged that he could hardly see, was being led by two others, themselves wounded but with eyes untouched. One man came up to me: "What am I to do?" he asked, "I am gassed." The little company tried to keep themselves in some kind of military formation. They stumbled and staggered on through the mud. It would have taken a Verschtagin to limn their misery. By good luck they had only a mile or so further to go, for a hospital was there, and in it they would be dealt with.

* * * *

A few days later, on November 6, the Canadians struck again. The Third and Fourth Divisions, which had so splendidly done their work, had been moved down the line, and the First and Second had taken their place. To them was given the honour of striking the final blows. The Germans had done their utmost to retrieve the situation. They had accumulated a very large number of troops and had sent up heavy reserves. It seemed as though they were concentrating every gun that the ground would carry on this one spot. Unfortunately, the attacks to our right and to our left had not been so successful. Most of the Allied advance begun on October 30 had failed. The result of this was that the Canadians, by their advance, had once more created a salient, where the enemy could attack us on the flanks and in front. In the case of this salient, however—unlike the old one at Ypres—we were on the upper ground and the enemy below us. The third attack was a repetition of the experiences of the first two. The village of Passchendaele itself, or what was left of it, did not present so serious a problem as might have been expected, although the Germans were fighting hard. The Canadians swept through the village and down beyond the village to the cross-roads. Passchendaele was ours.

Seven battalions took part in this day's attack, the 3rd, 2nd and 1st to the left, the 28th, 31st and 27th in the centre, and the 26th on the right. The greatest resistance was experienced

at Vine Cottage. The 26th Battalion gained the whole of its objectives very early in the day. The 27th Battalion went through the village of Passchendaele itself. There were great fights around "pill-boxes" all along the line. At Mosselmarkt, from which numerous counter-offensives had been directed at us, the whole garrison were killed or taken prisoners. Four days later the Canadians struck again, going down the other side of the ridge into the valley beyond. Here the greatest trouble was due to the fact that the Canadians had advanced far beyond the troops on either side of them, leaving their flanks exposed to attack. The 7th and 8th Battalions on the left and the 20th Battalion on the right carried their objectives.

We had hoped that the capture of Passchendaele was to mark the German evacuation of northern Belgium. Had the other parts of our programme gone as was intended, had, in particular, the fighting early in October been successful, this result would almost certainly have been obtained. But although the Allies came on the edge of a great and sweeping success, the full fruits of victory, unfortunately, could not be reaped. Already enemy troops and guns were pouring over from the Russian front. Already vast masses of impressed labour were erecting fresh lines of forts against us. In London optimistic writers were fixing the date for the end of the war. The favourite time seemed to be December 24. One popular and

highly remunerated prophet had thrilled his millions of readers with his glowing pictures of the great triumphs that were coming in the immediate future. When some of us returned to London, told what we had seen and declared that the idea of an early victorious peace was nothing but a dream, our friends looked at us suspiciously. But we had seen and knew. Even such triumphs as Canada had scored in her great year of triumph, had not yet brought the end. The full price for world liberty was not yet paid.

Having completed their task, the Canadians returned shortly afterwards to the Lièvin front. The battle of Passchendaele was, in many ways, the most severe and costly fight the corps had undertaken. Every objective was captured. The prisoners taken were comparatively few—1,174. This was due to the stubborn fighting. The losses on both sides were tremendous. Some months afterwards Sir Robert Borden, in the Dominion House, stated that the Canadian casualties at this fight were 24,000. The German losses were much greater, they losing very heavily in their repeated unsuccessful attempts at counter-attacks. "I never saw so many dead in my life," said one veteran of many battles.

For months thousands of dead lay, heaped up in block-houses or buried amid the mud. The fresh troops that came up did their best, when possible, to give decent interment, but the character of the ground made it difficult. Then,

when spring time came, many bodies that had sunk in, rose to the surface again. The Newfoundlanders were holding the ridge at the time, and they did their best to bury all. At one point a pair of giants rose to the surface, a big Canadian who had grappled with a big German. Both had fought desperately, and had died in the mud in each other's arms. The soldiers tried to separate the bodies. They could not do it, and the two had to be buried together.

Was Passchendaele justified? That is for other times to decide. For soldiers it was enough that they had been ordered to take the place. They took it. The Canadians never asked for the job, but once it was given them, they carried it through.

From January until mid-November, the Canadians had been engaged in almost daily battle. They had lost in the year 83,347 men. In order to keep up their strength in the field they had sacrificed their old political alignments, formed a Union Government, and carried conscription. "What more can we do?" was the question of army and people alike.

15. THE NEXT STAGE.

THE Canadians spent the winter of 1917-1918 on the Lens front. They had a somewhat trying and dreary time. There was no hope of advance. The word had gone out that the Allied Armies were to stand fast and to do no more than to seek to hold what they had. Everyone knew

that the Germans on the West had been enormously strengthened by the accession of their armies from the Eastern front. They were in high fettle. Russia had been conquered. The impalpable atmosphere of victory had drifted across the lines.

"Will the Germans attack? Where? When?" These were the subjects of debate. Along the Canadian front there was only one prayer, and that was that they might attack just where the Canadians were, for everything was ready for them. "It will cost the Germans a million men to win a mile of land here," said one famous general to me.

During the black days of March-April, 1918, I was with the American Army on the Lorraine front, and so escaped first-hand touch with events on our front in that dreadful period. There came rumours from old comrades of how the Canadian railway men had fought with the sticks and shovels when the Germans came on them, of how a hastily formed machine-gun battery on the southern front had held up a German advance, and how our motor machine batteries had done splendid things. I found some wounded men from the Canadian Cavalry Brigade in a village of mid-France, who told a tale that made one's heart thrill, of how our cavalry had been thrown into the great breach, riding and fighting day and night, moving rapidly, striking hard, harrying the enemy and holding up large forces. A little later I met

English cavalrymen who had been on the same job. They told how our brigades had ridden with them and fought with them, how they went forward to the seemingly impossible and had done it.

May found me back with the Canadians again. Their long spell on the Lens front was over. They had been summoned behind the lines for a rest, with one division in the line further south, and the remaining three learning the new art of open war, practising with new weapons, adapting themselves to the changed physical conditions open war involves.

I found Northern France transformed. A large number of villages and towns which I knew the year before as busy, thriving centres, were now deserted. It was melancholy to go through them, to pass along the silent streets, to note the shuttered houses, to come every here and there on one building or a group of buildings razed to the ground by bomb or shell. Sometimes the silence was disturbed by the footsteps of a family group, the mother with baby in arms and with little toddlers by her side, the old grandfather and grandmother pressing on stiffly, and the eldest boy pushing a wheelbarrow with the main family treasures in it. These were refugees who had clung to their home to the last possible moment, and now were going back amongst strangers, to live maybe fourteen or fifteen in a room, as best they could. What I saw and heard in those days has made it difficult

for me to speak of anything that I have ever known as hardship. Here was hardship in all its grim, stark reality.

Amiens was a forsaken city. Even the hardy population of Poperinghe had gone. The old restaurants were in ruins, and in one case several of the staff had been killed in the ruins. Cassel, peaceful Cassel, was now a grandstand, from which one could see the drama of war immediately around.

Still further back the circle of death from bomb, shell and gas had stretched into districts which, six months before, had seemed almost as remote from actual fighting as a British Columbian village. The long range gun and the aeroplane had done this. The long range gun enabled shells to be dropped in places twenty and more miles behind the lines. But the long range gun was comparatively a minor evil. The aeroplane was much worse.

During the day few German planes dared show themselves. Two British airmen would put half a dozen Germans, mounted on superior machines, to flight. Here and there a Hun took his life in his hands and attempted a daylight raid or reconnaisance over our lines. On one such occasion, as the German plane darted in, a British plane mounted above it. The German manœuvred desperately, twisting, doubling, looping, moving high and moving low, attempting to reach his own lines. But the British plane steadily bore him down. Time after time the

German tore the air with the drum of bullets from his machine-gun. The English flyer avoided them all, and at last we saw the British plane sweep to the side of him. We heard a rattle of bullets from the British gun, and the Hun came crashing to earth, a shapeless wreck.

That was in daytime. But at night it was different. It is practically impossible, except in the case of a great city like London, where numerous costly defences can be centred, to prevent enemy planes from coming over your positions at night. You can force the pilots to fly high by shell fire. You can turn them away from particular spots by taking special measures. But you cannot protect the whole heavens. We knew this. Night after night the double throbbing of the German Gothas would be heard. We knew that for every bomb dropped over our lines a dozen at least were dropped on theirs. We knew that, while they dared only come at night, our men were crossing their lines in daylight, sweeping down and machine-gunning them, punishing them heavily.

Our own airmen, bubbling over with cheerfulness and confidence, came back from each expedition as from a festival. "This is the greatest life on earth," one Toronto lad said to me, as he landed back and slipped off his air dress.

"No more toiling through the mud with the infantry for me. Every expedition is a great adventure. Once it was doubtful before you

started out if you would come back; now, on our section of the line our domination over the Boche is so absolute that we know each journey is going to be all right.

"The other afternoon another airman and myself went out photographing the Hun trenches. Seven Boche planes saw us. They had twice as fast machines as ours, but in place of attacking they hurried back. That was typical of the Hun. Their planes remain well to the rear under the shelter of their guns.

"Each time, before returning, we swoop down and empty our machine-guns on some picked Hun position. You should see them scuttle. We have Fritz scared stiff."

In a number of places during those early summer days the civilians went from their homes at night and slept on the sea shore or in the woods, anywhere to be away from their houses. It was a common sight coming just about darkness from one place to another, to see the mother and babies moving out into the fields, the mother often enough with one sturdy youngster on her shoulder while she wheeled a perambulator with one or two more in it.

The civilian population were feeling the strain as perhaps never before. But there was certainly no depression and no signs of depression among the soldiers.

"My God!" cried one senior officer to a civilian who remarked on the cheerfulness of his men. "How did you expect to find us? Did you think

that we would be sitting down crying our eyes out because we had got a slap in the face? Not 'arf. We are waiting our chance to slap Fritz back and hit him hard." "Thank God I am back again," said a major in the mess to which I was attached as he returned from a short visit to England. "London is too down in the mouth for me. The people had better come out here for a week or two to get their spirits bucked up." The major was not altogether just to London. It was enduring its dark hours very well.

One extraordinary fact was that, although the German Army had gained several undeniably great victories, our soldiers—I can speak at first-hand for the Canadians, and I believe it was the same with most of the British—so far from thinking more of them because of their gains, despised them more. It never seemed to enter their minds that the German soldier could possibly be their equal. They knew that when they came up against him individually, in nine cases out of ten, Fritz could not stand up to them. Most men who had seen much fighting could tell stories, recent stories, of how the Germans had given in when our men got close. Our lads were more than ever convinced that, soldier for soldier, man for man, the German was not in the same class with them. They admitted the strength of his organisation, but they did not believe that in the end inferior men could

beat superior men by temporarily superior organisation.

The Canadians had come from the Lens front tired out. They had had a very long line to hold. This had meant long spells in the trenches.

Now they found themselves in a beautiful countryside, with a kindly and friendly people, in sunny weather, with canals and rivers just at the right temperature for bathing. They revelled in the time of rest. Every afternoon one could see the men shedding the mud and grime and weariness and fatigue of the old front line like magic. There was bathing to be had. Some troops had not washed for weeks. "We didn't pick 'em off," said one man. "We scraped 'em off by the spoonful." What "'em" were I leave you to imagine. Baseball, cricket and other sports were organised in every camp. They had well earned their rest; now they were going to have it.

Rest is a comparative term. Roughly, the days were divided into two parts. During the first half of the day there was steady training; during the second half there was play. On some occasions, with manœuvres, there was a full day of training followed by a full day of play. Play and work alternated.

Saturday afternoons were our great days. Germans who imagined that our armies were tremblingly awaiting their next move would have had a surprise had they been able to follow me one particular Saturday afternoon, when I

visited different sections of the Corps. I first went to a baseball match between two divisions of medicals, where the "fans" were shouting themselves hoarse. The band, the sunshine, and the beautiful surroundings, with afternoon tea under the trees, made the war, despite the occasional noise of bombardment, seem very far away.

"The Second Brigade invites us all to its sports on Saturday," our mess president had told us at breakfast that morning. "The usual kind of thing, I suppose," one man remarked. "Wrestling and tent pegging, and so on." "Not a bit of it," said the president. "This is going to be a cracker-jack. The brigade is out to beat the band this time."

When I moved on from the baseball match and reached where the men with the little old red patch were, I found that I had plunged into what was probably the biggest thing of its kind ever attempted by any brigade in France.

A great stretch of country had been fenced off as a circus. The entire thing had been planned and carried out by the brigade in three days. Everyone was invited, from the countess of the neighbouring château to the shopkeeper and his wife of the little village near by, and from the corps commander to the nursing sisters in the casualty stations around. Everyone came and the brigade held open house.

The little French children came in great numbers, and the officers took particular care

to make them all feel at home, carrying the kiddies on their shoulders, organising games and treating them all as distinguished guests.

For one afternoon we ignored the Hun. We shut our ears to the sound of gunfire not far off, and refused to recognise that the occasional humming overhead was an enemy plane. In the whole entertainment, from first to last, Fritz was forgotten.

There were the usual preliminaries—wrestling on horseback, blindfold boxing and mule racing. In one novelty mounted race of four hundred and forty yards the competitors had to ride a quarter distance sitting, a quarter on their knees, a quarter standing and a quarter vaulting over, finishing up by standing on their horses.

Then came the great circus procession. There were hundreds of performers, all soldiers, and all in costume, and a ring-master so wonderfully attired that he might have come straight from Barnum and Bailey's. Three band waggons led the way, with numerous floats following.

The most successful float represented the return of the Canadians home from the war. A group of greybeards sat upon a raft mounted upon a great waggon. Their beards reached to their waists, and their service badges and chevrons for wounds covered their sleeves to their shoulders. The stump of a tree served for a mast. One man to the rear was manipulating a chopper as a rudder, while the others were

battling desperately with their oars. On the mast hung the motto, "Canada or bust."

This was the hit of the day. Even the three-ringed circus performance which followed, or the other floats with their wild men in chains and wild women in chains, and one with an individual rumoured to be a general in chains, could not rival it.

The circus ended with grand chariot races. But the day was by no means yet over. We all moved in a body—troops, performers and villagers, generals and children—to a château a mile or two away. Here an open-air stage had been erected, and as we sat under the trees drinking tea and renewing old friendships, the divisional theatrical company—all of them fighting men belonging to the division—gave us an *al fresco* performance that would not have disgraced many a London hall.

The concert was followed by a band performance. Then in one of the stately rooms of this château sisters and officers and visitors started to dance. Our Canadian girls escaped for a moment from the atmosphere of war. Heaven knows their work is hard enough and long enough, and they looked as though the change was needed.

16. THE KILLING OF THE NURSES.

I HAVE seen many crimes of Germany in this war. I was in Belgium when her armies outraged, burned, and destroyed; I heard from the

lips of dying men flung from her decks, the tale of how the *Lusitania* had been sunk; I have helped at the Dutch frontier to receive British prisoners, wrecked and broken by the cruelty of their German captors; I have lived in the recovered cities of France, and learned from their people of the nameless cruelties and bestialities inflicted on them. But never have I witnessed anything which has filled me with such cold rage as the killing by German airmen of our nurses, doctors and helpless men in Northern France.

Stretching along a sandy valley on the coast between Boulogne and Etaples, far away from the fighting line, a number of hospitals for sick and wounded soldiers have been grouped together. The place has been frequently described. There is no secret about its position. These temporary buildings, wooden huts, galvanised iron sheds and lines of tents—are the centre of an organisation of healing that has frequently been held up to admiration as one of the wonders of the world.

The hospitals number many thousands of beds. Included among them are three Canadian hospitals. One was transferred from another place on account of its exposure there to shell fire, during the latter half of May, 1918.

The British authorities did not think the Germans would bomb a large hospital centre. And so there were no dug-outs, no bomb-proof casements, and no protection against shell

splinters. The sides of the huts were not even sandbagged, and so did not present protection of any kind, except one ward, which had been rivetted. The authorities probably felt, and one can understand their feeling, that the very openness of the place was its best protection.

Whit-Sunday, May 19th, had been a clear, bright day, with a cloudless sky at night. In the evening some sisters at one hospital, who had been to a concert, were returning to their quarters, when they heard two shots from the north followed by a loud humming. Most of the personnel and most of the patients were asleep at the time. "It's a Gotha," said one of the sisters. Nothing could be seen, but almost instantly there came a terrific crash, and a monster bomb fell directly on the quarters of the orderlies and other male hospital attendants. These orderlies were mostly elderly men beyond fighting age. Most of them were asleep. The bomb made a direct hit on a wooden building, wiping it out and started a considerable fire. Some of the orderlies were so blown to bits that it was afterwards found impossible to recognise their remains. The fire caught a big tent near-by, lighting the whole neighbourhood.

There was a squadron of aeroplanes overhead, a line of them, each some distance apart from the other. They dropped their bombs in lines, crashing and smashing the hospitals.

The bombs continued to fall for some time. Then there came a pause. The first squadron

had exhausted its supplies. Three other squadrons came up at intervals. Hour after hour that night the hellish bombardment from the sky was maintained.

What was happening down below? At the first explosion the officer in charge of one hospital, Lieut.-Colonel J. A. Gunn, moved out to take command of the situation. He instantly had the lights turned out. He went from point to point, amid the bursting bombs, directing affairs. He hurried to the sisters' quarters and commanded that they should all lie down under their beds. Then he hurried across the open to where a tent was burning, to help some men to put it out. As he started to fight the flames another bomb fell, and an orderly, fifty years old, was killed at his side.

Two other doctors tried to come up. As they crossed a bit of green a bomb fell right on it. Captain D. E. Howes was killed, and the officer commanding one of the hospitals, who happened to be in another one at the time, was wounded.

In the wards patients and nurses took the situation with remarkable calm. The chief anxiety of the patients was lest the sisters should be hurt. The sisters, on their part, moved about doing whatever they could. All that they could do was as nothing, because there was nothing possible in the way of protection.

"Lie down, Sister; lie down!" the men called at each crash. In one ward where the sister refused to protect herself, some of the wounded

soldiers caught her and held her down. "We won't let you get killed," they said. And they tried to shelter her with their own bodies.

There were 1,156 patients in the hospital that night. Three hundred of these were femur cases, where the patients had to lie with the leg fixed by bandages in an extended position to a firm, immovable framework. They could not stir and they could not be moved. They had simply to lie helpless while the bombs were bursting around. The only thing that could be done for most of the others was to place them under their beds.

In one of the nurses' quarters the day sisters off duty hurried to the doorway when the first crashes came. The call came over for two sisters to go and help at a critical point. "Who will go?" called the matron. Every nurse volunteered. She picked on the nearest two girls, who moved out amidst the bursting shell fragments as quietly and as bravely as soldiers going on a forlorn hope. Then she turned to the others. "All of you get back to your rooms," she said, "and lie under your beds. You will be called when you are wanted." And they went out quietly, obeying orders. Some of the beds were so low that they could not lie under them.

"The nursing sisters," said the matron-in-chief, Miss Macdonald, "acted as though they considered themselves fortunate in having an opportunity of sharing the horrors that our men undergo daily in the front areas."

Even lying down did not give protection. One bomb fell right on a sisters' quarters, practically destroying one wing. If it had not been that this wing was mostly used by sisters who were on night duty the casualties would have been much greater. Miss K. S. Macdonald was killed on the spot and seven were wounded; two of these, Nursing Sisters G. M. M. Wake and M. Lowe, died later.

When the first German squadron sailed away lights were turned up in the operating theatres. Doctors, nurses and the remaining orderlies started to try to do something for the badly wounded. Doctors and nurses began sifting out the living from the dead. They had barely set to their work before the bombs began to fall again. At one point a German plane came low and swept the rescue parties with a machine-gun.

The most awful scene of all was around the burning tents and huts. "You can imagine what it was like getting the killed and wounded out of those burning huts," wrote one man. "Some of them had arms and legs blown away; some were headless. It was terrible."

Picture the scene now! The nurses helping the doctors had little hand lamps, which they held up for the doctors to see by. Sometimes the force of the explosions threw them to the ground; sometimes in intervals of their operations obeying orders they would drop for a second as each bomb struck, and then get up

again and go on with their next task. "Every night sister deserved a Victoria Cross," said the day sisters. It was a time when both day sisters and night sisters, doctors, helpers and patients showed such heroism as should never be forgotten in the story of our race.

No words can convey any full impression of the horror of those hours.

The raid lasted two hours. The casualties were very considerable. How could they be otherwise when the Germans had practically a free run of a defenceless place crowded with people? The first bombs that fell on the sleeping quarters of the men attendants killed or wounded more than half of them. Fifty-one non-commissioned officers and men were killed and forty-five wounded, six of them so seriously that they afterwards died. Six patients were killed and thirty-two wounded, of whom two afterwards died.

One hospital received its share of bombs. Three officers, including a chaplain, were wounded, one of the rank and file killed and twenty-one wounded, some of them fatally. Nine patients were killed and thirty-seven wounded. In one tent every man save one was killed. The survivors of this hospital, who could be spared from their own wounded, at once rushed over to help to put out the fire at another one. A third hospital was a good mark, for the white tents showed up against the dark framework of the surrounding hills. Eight bombs were

dropped in a line here, a few yards from each other. The eighteen casualties included two nursing sisters.

The Germans returned again on Tuesday night. This time, however, preparations had been made, compelling their retirement. Immediately steps were taken to make the camp more safe against attack. Only one man was killed on Tuesday.

A few nights afterwards the Germans attacked another Canadian hospital. Here, again, it was a clear moonlight night. One aeroplane dropped a flare and immediately following the flare it dropped several bombs. An incendiary bomb struck the hospital building, which was several stories high, causing a fire. This was a busy time in the hospitals, as there had been much fighting. Three surgical teams had been at work that night. Two had completed their work and gone; the third had evidently nearly finished, for the stretcher-bearers had come to remove the patient. There were two doctors, Captain Meek and an American, Lieutenant A. P. H. Sage, and two sisters, Misses E. L. Pringle and A. Macpherson, and three theatre orderlies. These, with the patient and the two stretcher-bearers, were killed. In all three doctors and three nurses were killed, one nurse was wounded, sixteen other ranks killed and sixteen other ranks wounded. Out of the patients, six officers were killed and two officers and thirty rank and file wounded or missing. In all there were forty-nine casualties

among doctors, nurses and patients and thirty-two of these were deaths.

The bomb that struck the hospital caused a rapid fire, which it was almost impossible to control. Two sisters, the Misses M. Hodge and E. J. Thompson, were looking after their patients in the resuscitation ward. They were both wounded, but they refused to see to their own wounds. They struggled along, turned out the coal oil heaters to limit the fire as much as they could, and then remained in the ward, directing the removal of every patient and refusing to leave it until all had been taken to safety. Men tore up the flaming stairs to rescue the wounded. One nurse slid down the debris leading her patients, the stairway having been burned away. The blaze lit up the whole country-side. While the work of rescue was at its height, German aeroplanes returned and dropped several other bombs around. In this case, fortunately, the bombs all landed harmlessly in a field near by. "Those who have laid down their lives for others shall be avenged," said Bishop Fallon, in his address at the solemn funeral service which followed. Bishop Fallon was on a visit to the front at the time and earned the respect and affection of every man who came in contact with him, whatever his Church might be.

What was the impression made by these events on the Army itself? The whole facts about these attacks upon the hospitals did not become known

at the front for several days. When the news spread along the lines it created fury and indignation beyond words. The British soldier of all ranks has a feeling of respect, affection, and great kindness for the nursing sisters. When one body of Australians saw something of what had happened they wanted to go out and kill—and kill—and kill.

I went from the corps to visit the hospital at Etaples to go over the wreck. It was a pitiful and tragic sight. The authorities were making preparations to defend the place now, building dug-outs and putting sandbags to the sides of the huts. That afternoon they had served out steel helmets to the nurses. The nurses not on duty were taken away at night now to a place some distance off in the open, where they could sleep in greater safety. They were trying to make a joke of it. They smiled as they told their experiences, but it was a smile more pitiful than tears.

There was one man with me that afternoon whom I had never heard use an oath before. But as we left the hospital grounds he turned to me, " May God damn and blast for ever the Huns who did this," said he. Do you wonder?

Two German airmen were captured on the Sunday night. They were taken to our hospitals and nursed there. Their excuse was that they did not know that there were hospitals below. Frankly, this excuse is absolutely incredible. The lights of the burning buildings alone must

have revealed the hospitals. The German authorities knew their position. It was a brilliant moonlight night, and the men flew very low.

17. NEW WAYS OF WAR

THE Canadian Army during the summer of 1918 was busy preparing itself for the renewal of the offensive, under the changed conditions created by German tactics and methods in their spring advance.

Trench war as we had known it since the first arrival of the Canadian troops in France in February, 1915, had gone, and war positions had come. We still used trenches, and it would be a mistake to talk of trenches as obsolete. Fresh trenches had been dug along our new lines. But the trench was no longer the dominating feature of the situation. War was to become what soldiers had long hoped for—open war, where armies fought and moved and cavalry came into play again, where the initiative of the individual soldier obtained full opportunity and generalship could show itself in other ways than the building up of cumbersome defences.

The Germans, by their excellent organisation and sustained blows on the Western front had proved that trenches, however elaborate and carefully planned, could be effectively pierced. For months before this it had been evident that the development of high explosives and of gas had made trenches a diminishing factor in the war. We had proved this at Vimy, at Messines

and at Passchendaele. Trenches might delay an advance, but they could not wholly hold it up, other circumstances being favourable to the attackers. "There isn't a position on the Western front that the Canadian Corps cannot capture and hold provided adequate preparations are made in advance," was an axiom with the corps staff even in the summer of 1917.

The greatest factor new in the war was the gas shell. We had been familiar with gas in one form or another since the second battle of Ypres. At first it was stored in cylinders, taken to the front lines, released by means of pipes when the wind was in the right direction and was blown by the wind over on to the enemy lines. Cloud gas had many disadvantages. It could only be used when the wind was favourable. To carry sufficient numbers of cylinders into your front lines was hard work. When the cylinders were in position you might have to wait for days until the wind was right. During that time enemy shells might very well break the cylinders, gassing your own men. Even when everything seemed right, the wind sometimes veered at the wrong moment and turned the gas which you intended for the enemy on yourself. I have earlier referred to the instance of this on Vimy Ridge at the beginning of March, 1917.

Soldiers at once saw the advantages of the gas shell, but there were many difficulties in the way of making such a shell effective and of giving

it a sufficient charge of concentrated gas of the right kind to be of any real use. Gas shells were used to some extent early in 1916, and were increasingly and enormously employed at the battle of the Somme. All through 1917 the gas shell came to play a bigger and bigger part. But neither side knew how to use it to its full effect. I was at Bully-Grenay in February, 1917, a few hours after the Germans had bombarded the place with 2,000 phosgene shells. They succeeded in killing seven people. A few weeks before this they had fired 3,000 gas shells into Arras, where, apparently they were somewhat more successful.

The autumn of 1917 saw the gas shell more and more coming into its own. Men were learning how to concentrate it at particular points, chemists were learning how to give it the most effective charges, and experience was proving the right atmospheric conditions for its use. Chlorine-phosgene and tear gas were giving way for still more dangerous forms.

"Mustard gas" the soldier calls it, came into use on a large scale. The gas shells had low explosive charges, burst without any great noise and scattered their invisible contents around. The gas being heavy, lay low and hung about, possibly for days afterwards. Cellars along the front, unless properly and carefully guarded by blankets, became death traps. You might step into a pocket of gas anywhere. The first thing you would detect would be a slightly sweetish

taste. If you were not very careful and inhaled a mouthful or two, your number was up.

Heat made the gas more volatile. A man having some of the gas clinging about his clothing might go to a fire, when the gas would vapourise, rise and poison him. It blinded men, but not, as a rule, permanently. In nearly all cases one was able to see again after a few days, with blinking, bleary eyes.

Now one learned along the front lines to have one's gas mask always ready. But even the gas mask could not always be a protection. There comes a moment when you can wear your mask no longer, when, after hours of fighting in it and living in it, the elastic band bites into your skin, chafing and irritating it beyond endurance, when the mere keeping the rubber tube in your closely-shut mouth becomes no longer bearable. That is the case with the ordinary man resting behind the lines or doing quiet work. One can understand how much more so it is with gunners operating their artillery hour after hour amidst gas-drenched air and with men pushing on, fighting in gassed air.

Naturally we employed gas, and if the accounts of German prisoners are to be believed, our gas shells were even more effective than their own. At the same time we evolved better and better methods of protection. We had the best box respirator gas mask of all the armies. Gas was the dominating factor in the fighting of 1918.

Next to gas I would put the rifle smoke

grenade among the leading new factors. The use of smoke for a screen is a very old device, dating back to the early ages of the world. Our Navy, in the fighting around the Belgian coast in 1914-15, used smoke bombs as screens in very effective fashion. The Germans brought the use of the smoke bomb for aeroplanes and Zeppelins to a great point of excellence, creating clouds, concealing the whereabouts of the aircraft. But 1918 had brought a further development, the smoke rifle grenade. A number of men in every battalion were served out with this grenade. A few grenades fired so as to explode in front of the enemy lines would create a temporary smoke barrier, enabling our men to advance.

This was specially effective in attacking enemy strong points and machine-gun nests. The grenades would cover these with a cloud of smoke, blinding the men. Our attackers could get right up to the place, themselves outside the smoke barrier, and could bomb and finish them.

A third new factor was the increased mobility of light artillery. Means were evolved of bringing guns and howitzers up in carts as fast as infantry could advance. I myself have seen howitzers brought into the line, emplacements made secure, aim taken and fire opened within a minute. Had this been possible at Vimy, the Canadian Corps could then have gone right through the line of villages which afterwards held us up for so long.

The troops had to be trained physically for

open war. Trench warfare, while intensely wearying and exhausting, is comparatively passive. Even in a big advance you move forward at a slow march, keeping pace with the barrage. There are times in trench warfare when men are called upon for the most appalling physical exertion, but this is the exception. In open war troops have to be ready to march long distances, day after day, and to move rapidly. Officers have to acquire the art of judging positions, of seeking the right kind of shelter.

The Canadians were favourably placed. The corps was not only up to strength, but much over strength. "Up to strength and over strength, with never any weakening in numbers," was the Canadian motto. "Battalions will continue to fight bravely under heavy loss," said Sir Richard Turner, the Canadian Chief of General Staff on one occasion, "but there comes a moment when they look around at their thinned ranks and ask, Who is going to fill the gap? Our gaps will be filled." The sound military wisdom of this policy is beyond question.

The Canadians believed in themselves. They knew what they could do. They had confidence in their own powers and in their leaders. The rank and file had come to look on their Corps Commander with absolute faith. What he said went. On one occasion Bishop Fallon, who spent a great deal of his time with the men in the ranks while with the army in the summer of 1918, was discussing with a party of soldiers

the prospects of the summer campaign. He told them what General Foch thought. "Oh, hell!" said one soldier. "What we want to know is what Old Man Currie thinks about it."

General Currie did not win the good will of his men by being an "easy boss." Nothing was good enough for him but the best. When others were purring with satisfaction at what they had done, he would be seeking the way to do it somehow better. The officer, however high, who slacked off found, when he least expected it, that Currie was keeping track of him. Nothing but the best would do. I was present one afternoon at a brigade conference. Commanders and umpire were very pleased with what was happening, and said so. Then Currie, who had been quietly listening, rose. He began with a joke. He followed the joke with a punch, and inside of two minutes every man there was sitting alert, wondering why he had not done better, and learning how he was to do it better.

The commander knew the game, and the men knew that he knew. "When —— comes round to us to inspect," said one battalion officer to me, "we are all ready for him. Everything looks very nice. He says very pleasant things about us, and we are all mutually satisfied. But when Old Man Currie comes round he has a way of lighting on all the weak spots. When his inspection is finished we find that we have got some weeks' work ahead to be ready for him when he comes again."

Efficiency! The men knew that they were efficient. They knew that their discipline was such and their organisation such that whatever soldiers were able to do they could do. "I am the proudest man in the British Isles because I command the finest fighting force in all the Allied Armies," said General Currie, when on a visit to England. "Everywhere to-day, at General Headquarters and all other places it is recognised that Canadian soldiers are fit to take their place beside the veteran soldiers of the British Army, with whom we are proud to serve. I have never seen the corps in finer fighting fettle than it is to-day."

By July the corps was ready for its great new venture, ready to the last trace of the oldest transport harness. The hearts of the men were aflame, because of what Germany had been doing that summer. Early in August the corps moved down to a new line. The Intelligence Department had arranged that the Germans should believe them to be going to Flanders. Instead of that they took over a part of the Australian line to the south, and on the morning of August 8th they struck, French and British moving forward together. How surely they struck all the world knows, and the miles of country re-occupied and the thousands of prisoners taken testify. The high tide of German victory had been reached. On that morning the tide turned—turned in our favour.

PART II.

SCATTERED FIELDS, 1915-16

1. SEEKING AN ARMY

It was near the end of January, 1915.

As we bumped along the muddy road from Bustard Camp to the city of Salisbury in a big motor transport waggon a sergeant from Toronto and a corporal from Moose Jaw were discussing the situation.

They were both Scots, and, therefore, both inclined to be pessimistic. "We're growing stale," said the corporal. "Drilling and marching, fatigues and more drill takes the heart out of the men. We're wasting our time here, fooling around in the mud. It will be all over before ever we see the front. French will make the 'great push.' The Germans will crumple up and then no one will want us."

"Dinna fash yerseil," said the sergeant. "You're an impatient set of raw lads, like unlicked cubs. Fight! Why, mon, to hear ye talk you would think war was all fighting. Of course we can fight. Any fool can fight. But can you wait, lie low, do nothing for a month, and then fling yourselves against the Germans with all the fury of the deil himself? That's war-r-r! Can you wait? I hae me doots. You'd be braw

fighters if you had some discipline. Fight! Why, mon, if war was all fightin' it would be a graun holiday. Its waiting tries the heart of a man, waiting and going hungry and cold and wet, waiting and waiting and waiting. Do you remember what Robbie Burns said, 'My seven braw sons'—"

"If you quote Burns—" threatened the corporal, but at this moment the car gave an extra jerk as it plunged into a mudhole and threw us all off our feet, so we were spared the rest of the old Jacobite song. Our sergeant, you see, was an old regular, who had known fighting in South Africa and India.

"Have you seen the travelling kitchens?" began the third man. "They're dandies. They cook your dinner as you go along, and they follow behind the battalions. That's the sort of fighting I like. Hunt out Fritz for ten hours and then sit down to a good hot meal at the end that's been cooking all the time you've been fighting. Better than Salisbury Plain anyway."

"Mon!" said the sergeant, sorrowfully looking at him. "Mon, you've a lot to learn."

"Gay Paree for me," declared another of our party. "Didn't we wake up little old London? But that is not a thing to what we're going to do when we get to France. We'll strike the boolevards like young cyclones. They're going to keep us for a month at Rouen, sort of acclimatising us before we go to the front. Gee whiz, boys! Won't it be great!"

Just then our waggon swung round the sharp curve leading to Salisbury railway station and our informal debate came to an end.

A few days later word reached me in London that the Canadian contingent had left Salisbury Plain. It had started out for a route march and never returned. There were special reasons for secrecy about its departure. For weeks the Germans had exhausted their system of espionage to discover what the Canadians were doing. Their spies had enlisted in the ranks before the contingent left Canada, but a very efficient secret service system initiated by a Toronto electrical engineer, who was within the next two years to rise to high place in the Imperial Intelligence Service, weeded them out. High officers assured me that women had come to Salisbury and taken rooms there for the double purpose of spreading disease among our men and learning what they were doing. To meet these tactics an elaborate system of mystification had been planned. Day after day innumerable rumours had gone over the camp, but no one outside a small inner circle knew what was really to happen. Then the first of the transport corps moved out, soon to be followed by others. At midnight on Friday the mechanical transport section followed, and one Sunday early in February the departure of the infantry began.

I was anxious to see the battalions before they reached the war zone, and crossed to Rouen to

meet them. But the journey there seemed at first likely to give little results. Some Canadians had arrived, but had already gone. Walking down the Quai, I met an old friend with the maple leaves on his collar. "The contingent is not here," he said. "They're putting the troops on trains as soon as they land and sending them off. I believe they're off to Alsace to make a demonstration there. But I don't know, nobody knows except the staff."

The contingent lay outside the port all Wednesday night, and landed early on Thursday morning. At St. Nazaire a surprise met them. Great stocks of French clothing were ready for them on the quay. The men were served with the utmost rapidity with fur gloves from the Grand Duke Michael's fund, shaggy wolf skin coats, trench socks and mittens. Their brigade equipment of guns, carts and material of every kind was lashed on to open cars waiting on the railway line. Each train had a passenger coach for the officers and horse-boxes and freight cars for the men. Within two hours of landing some of the brigades were going eastwards. All they were to see of France, and all many of them ever saw, was a fleeting vision of winter fields and great towns, with the country people gathering at the sidings to cheer them as they sped, day and night, to the seat of war.

How was I to find them? It was quite impossible to arrive in time. I studied the map. Their most probable destination was Belgium.

To reach Belgium they would almost certainly proceed *via* Amiens. A great railway bridge somewhere outside Amiens had been broken during the French retirement earlier in the war. The trains would probably, therefore, stop at the nearest station before the broken bridge, at least for a short time. So I made for the last stopping place before the broken bridge.

In those days it was easier to travel about France than it was a little later. Reaching the village at half-past six in the evening, I found a British railway transport officer at the station. This was bad, for in the days when correspondents were not officially recognised, there was always danger that the man in authority might send you down to the base under arrest. Putting as bold a face on it as I could, I ordered a meal and waited. The next train leaving the village was at half-past eight. There was none after that until two o'clock the next day. If I could contrive to miss the 8.30 train I was all right.

Miss it I did! There was no hotel in the village, but the keeper of the railway restaurant consented to give me one of his bedrooms in the station itself that night. Early the next morning two or three officials suddenly hurried around, closing every approach and locking the doors. A monster military train was approaching. It stopped, and scores of men in khaki jumped on the platform, glad to escape even for a minute from their cramped quarters. They

all had shaggy fur coats and "woollies" and looked very different from the Canadians I had seen a few days before on the Plain. They were unshaven and dirty with days of travel. "Say, where are we?" they asked. "How far are we from the front? Where are we going?"

"Who are we? Why, we're the 'Little Black Devils.'" They were the famous Winnipeg regiment.

A busy few minutes followed. They wanted water, hot water for tea particularly. One turned to me and demanded half fiercely: "How far are we from the fighting lines?"

"You are about three hours away from Ypres," I told him. "Say, boys," one Manitoban giant yelled, "isn't that great?"

Just then the signal came for the train to start. One man began a chorus. They all took it up. Shouting, singing, waving greetings, happy that the time of preparation was over and real war beginning, they passed on. As the train cleared out of the station, the words came ringing through the air:

"Ho! ho! ah! ah! ah!
What the hell do we care?"

* * * *

I had to return to London. While waiting for a few minutes at Abbeville I tried to cross the railway line in a hurry, and did not notice the signal wire on the ground. My foot caught in

it and I was hurled forward. I can still remember the "blob" as the edge of my nose struck the middle rail.

A few minutes later, thanks to the good services of a railway pointsman and some fellow travellers I was back in the train. My left wrist was temporarily out of service. My right hand was distinctly lively and my face looked as though it had got rather the worst of the collision.

Quite a commonplace accident! you say. Quite! Had it happened at Brighton or Canterbury it would have passed without notice. But here it was different. For over a week afterwards my life was a burden trying to escape unmerited, unwanted, and crushing sympathy.

A kindly young infantryman whipped out his first-aid package and had my wrist bound up in a temporary sling before the train was out of the station. A little further down the line we passed a military hospital. An army doctor offered his services. There was not time to do much, for I had to keep on by the train if I were to catch my boat for England next morning. He soon had my coat off and the left arm in splints—military splints, with a great slab of red wadding emerging over the hand.

"Mind you see your own doctor the moment you get back to town," he said, and then the train was off.

Although I did not know it, the treatment had labelled me. Everyone could see that I had

received first-aid in a British field hospital. The only conclusion of the onlookers was that I was fresh from the front. I did not as yet realise what was before me.

The game started at Boulogne. One would imagine that in Boulogne, the hospital city of northern France, where thousands of wounded men—legitimately wounded men—are ever passing through, and where nearly every inhabitant who is not an army doctor is a Red Cross or hospital attendant—a bandaged man was too familiar a sight to attract any notice.

Not a bit of it. At the station I found that even the crowd around the booking hall made way for me as I hurried to my cab. I could hear expressions of pity and of sympathy. One girl—a very pretty girl—looked as though she were going to kiss me. I hurried to a waiting auto-taxi and escaped.

In the hotel it was worse. I washed the final traces of the mud off my face as well as I could with one hand, and slunk down into the dining-room.

There I found the most secluded corner and thought to escape observation. Every table in that hotel seemed to have an Army nurse, a Territorial nurse, or a nurse from the Red Cross Society sitting there. They had pity to spare for me, pity which made me realise the fraud I was. Anyhow I did not want dinner. The left wrist was giving me all the dinner I wanted.

I slipped up to my room, leaving the soup untasted.

But the real ordeal came next morning. The bonne and the valet came to my room together at eight o'clock and started making sympathetic speeches. They looked surprised when I drove them out. I had to call the valet back to help me put my clothes on, and then I set out for the municipal offices to get my permit to leave for England.

I suppose that I seemed a fairly miserable object, with my face cut about, a monster splint over my arm, and my overcoat roughly fastened over me with one sleeve hanging loose.

The fishwives coming down for the early morning catches paused to give me a word. A number of Tommies on the path ostentatiously got out of the way that I might have free passage. Passing French women looked as though they wanted to say something or do something for me. And I—well, if you want to make a man feel really foolish, sympathise with him when he doesn't deserve your sympathy. I felt that I was a cheat, and I ought to carry a label on me: "I ain't no wounded hero!" So I slunk up the nearest by-lane.

At the mayoral bureau an official suddenly darted out, took me away from the crowd clamouring to enter by the ordinary door, and led me through a special entrance. At the boat side some Italian labourers were jostling to get ahead. Half a dozen Tommies, suddenly, without

a word, formed themselves in line in such a way that the labourers were kept back, and I could walk forward at ease. All the usual troubles about passports and examinations seemed suddenly simplified for me.

I sank down on a deck-chair on the boat. The Channel packet that day was full of officers and soldiers coming home on leave. I tried clumsily to put my rug over my arm. A big colonel, a man whose deep bronzed cheeks and air of command showed that he, at least, had really been to the front, came up. "Monsieur," he murmured in unexpectedly gentle tones, "est-ce que —est-ce que vous desirez quelque chose?" The ship was out at sea by this time, and the appearance of a submarine in the distance—a British submarine it turned out to be—drew attention from me. In the interval I was able to hide myself under the friendly rug.

Then came the medical examination at Folkestone. I walked up to the entrance of the examination room. A Red Cross nurse appeared from somewhere, and took me in charge. She assumed, as a matter of course, that I had received at least a shrapnel wound, and by this time I had grown so tired of explaining to people that I let her continue in her belief.

When I finally got on shore the railway guard took me to a first-class carriage. "My ticket is second class," I said. "No, sir," he replied, "this is your place."

At Victoria the porter hesitated over taking his tip. The taxi-cabman picked out the smoothest roads, and, as I stepped out of the cab to walk into my house, a party of Boy Scouts, who were marching past, suddenly drew to attention and saluted me.

I got rid of the army splint and the red wool as quickly as I could, but even to have one's arm in a black bandage was enough to bring sympathy from all sides. After three or four days I came to see the humorous side of it, but I no longer wonder at the Tommy in his blue hospital coat sometimes resenting the kindly inquiries and well-meant sympathy of strangers.

2. "THE DIRTIEST BIT OF THE LINE"

HILL 60 is to-day no more. It has been blown to bits. But it was for long one of the most familiar points on the Western front. It jutted out into the No Man's Land, which hemmed it in on three sides. We held the lower part of the hill while the higher was held by the enemy. A slight dip separated us and, at one point, where the British occupied one side of a shell crater and the Germans the other, we were little more than fifteen yards apart. Our own side of the hill, a mass of trenches and dug-outs and walls of sandbags, showed in every yard the desperate nature of the fight always maintained there. This was for two years and more the hill of perpetual struggle. In the days when I knew it there was scarce an hour without its artillery

duel and scarce a day without its raid on the enemy's lines or an enemy raid on us. In the language of the army, it was for long "the dirtiest bit of the line."

As you approached Fritz generally contrived to give you a welcome. At night he shelled the road leading to it on principle. If you came in the daylight some of his planes or observation posts would probably sight you, and should his artillerymen think it worth while they would send a shell or two to quicken your pace. The souvenir hunter could have obtained enough treasures on the road to the hill to stock him for life.

Nearer in, you came to a section commanded by German machine-guns. Here you walked very quickly. This soon brought you into what was once a railway cutting, under the shadow of the hill itself. The cutting reeked of chloride of lime and worse. Probably you would find lying at the side, waiting for removal, one or two blanketted forms. It was not wise to enquire what they were. Every day the hill paid its toll of human life; some days heavier, some days lighter.

We had had a strenuous night, for which let me admit the Canadians were mainly responsible. We had attempted a raid, one of the little surprise parties frequent here. Our boys creeping out from our trenches in the darkness had crawled right up through the broken wire entanglements to the enemy parapets. They hoped

to find only a few sentries there, and to plunge in, take some prisoners, capture a machine-gun or two, and get back before Fritz could bring up his reinforcements.

But for once the Huns knew what we were doing. Just before the final moment, dozens of Germans rose up behind their parapets. There were bombers and machine-gun men and men with rifles. Happily the night was so dark that they could not see where the attackers were, and much of the firing was wild and useless even at that short range. But for this not a single man would have returned. Our party stood their ground, flung all their bombs into the enemy lines, and then rushed back to safety, bringing in their wounded. The boy captain in charge got a couple of bullets in him, one of them smashing his left hand. But he was not thinking of his own wound when he came in. "I made a mess of it somewhere," he muttered as he was helped along the narrow trench backwards.

"You did nothing of the kind," cried the Colonel, who had hurried up to meet the returning party. "It was just a bit of bad luck. It was not your fault."

A raid is always followed by punishment. That is one of the axioms of trench war. As soon as word was telephoned back from the German front to their artillery positions that we had tried to invade their lines, the guns began to take part in the game and raked us fore and

aft with high explosives. What with carrying in the wounded from the outer trenches and keeping out of the way of the shells, it was not until five in the morning that those who could be spared had dropped down for two or three hours' rest in the dug-outs.

I stood in the advanced dressing station as the wounded came in, a bare dug-out with two or three wooden rests, none too brightly lit up. It was the heart of the grimmest side of war. "Stand away from the entrance," said one of the doctors quickly. "A shell might catch you there." They were bringing in the wounded. Some were already in. One, horribly mauled, was lying on a stretcher in the shade, his face going ashen grey. Several were half sitting, half crouching on the earthen floor. There was not a whimper, not a groan, not so much as a grumble from one of them. There was even some joking, the usual dressing-station joke about "Blighties." One lad, with the figure of a Greek god, was carried face downwards with three bad wounds. "Thanks, awfully, old man, for looking after me and bringing me in," he said in a firm voice, to the chum who had stood by him and dragged him out of No Man's Land. Another was carried in on a comrade's back, and slithered quietly to the ground. Another, whose face had been badly hurt, was patiently waiting for his turn. Doctors, working with the utmost rapidity, went from man to man, the orderlies slitting up uniforms,

uncovering the wounds. First, the wounds were dressed with great dabs of iodine and then they were hastily bandaged. There was no time to do more than this in the advanced dressing station. Operations, save in the most extreme cases, waited until the patients get further down to the casualty clearing station. A clerk took each man's name, wrote it on a white label with particulars of his wound, and this label was tied prominently to him.

As we emerged into the open trench, the colonel, a Scot noted for his hardy courage even amid this corps, started to speak, and then hesitated. I think it was not easy for him to find his voice, for these were lads of his own battalion. "If they could see them at home," he said. "If they could know what our boys are doing!"

Soon after seven o'clock I could rest no longer, and so I set out round the lines. In other parts of the front we pride ourselves on our neat trenches. I know C.O.'s who regard a broken sandbag or an irregular parados as an offence against the King's regulations. But on the hill we were glad enough to be able to rebuild our trenches in any shape, after they had been again brought down by enemy shells.

Fritz was quiet this morning. Probably his gunners were tired after the strafing they had given us during the night. Most of the shells had done so little harm, but the last had fallen among a group of three; two of them were killed

outright, the third, hurled back and covered by the body of his comrade, was bruised but otherwise unhurt.

I went to an uphill communication trench. A sergeant near by stopped me. "Don't go there, sir," he said. "The Huns can track you there, and if anyone moves on that spot, they fire." "I'll stoop low," I assured him. "It will only mean a 'Blighty' at the worst." "That's no 'Blighty' trench," he retorted. "If you crawl on your hands and knees you may only get a 'Blighty' if you're lucky. If you move through it stooping you'll be an R.I.P. sure." If any reader wants an interpretation of "R.I.P." let him glance at the tombstones of the next churchyard.

I heard some voices a little further on, outside the entrance to King Solomon's Mine. King Solomon's Mine was a deep dug-out, so deep that even a direct hit from a heavy shell could not affect it. Here the boys lay and rested when off duty, as much off duty, that was, as anyone could be at this point. It was a weird sight at the bottom of the dug-out. There was a narrow passageway faintly showing a small light at the other end. On either side were bunks, all full of sleeping men, every man in full uniform with rifle to hand, all prepared to spring to arms at a moment's notice.

Outside, at the entrance, a few early risers like myself were shaving and chatting and joking. The British Army was certainly the best-shaved

army the world had ever known. From private to brigadier, safeties and little steel mirrors were used every morning where possible. In the intervals of shaving the boys were talking. What were they talking about, you ask? Just as varied topics as you were talking about this morning—of the two chums who had been killed during the night, of the sports that were being arranged for them when they reached the rest camp, of the prospects of relief.

There was no high-falutin' talk. The Canadian soldier is not built that way any more than the Briton is. He makes no brag of his courage, at any rate not after his first week in the trenches. He calls his dug-out a "funk-hole." He delights to tell you of how he skipped off when he thought a shell was coming his way.

But I have noticed that those who were most given to dwell on how afraid they were at a hot moment were those who went through the hot moments most quietly and steadily. "Like it? What the hell is the use of asking me how I like it!" growled an angry man from Winnipeg to an innocent enquirer. "What's liking got to do with it, anyway? I've got to do it, and that's an end of it. You had better come and try it yourself and see if you like it or not."

And there was not much to like. From the periscope one could gaze on the broken, dreary-looking trenches on the other side, revealing nothing but a bit of torn and broken ground. To the right of us was the dump, just a great mass

of earth, riddled and smashed, with bits of torn planking and broken wire about it. To the left was a little strip of level ground. So many shells had fallen on it that they had obliterated even the shell holes, and all one saw was a field of ploughed, torn, yellowish-brown soil. Still further on one could see what a little while ago had been a wood—Maple Copse, of historic memory. Now all that was left of the trees was bare and pointed trunks; every branch, every leaf, had been torn off by shells. Underneath the trunks of the trees the summer foliage had grown, and amid the foliage still lay brown-faced bodies in the shrunken uniforms, friend and foe, who had fallen there not long before in fierce battle.

Like it? Well, after all, it was rather foolish to talk of liking it, wasn't it?

* * * *

I was called away from the hill that morning to another part of the line, and it was not until early in the following afternoon that I was able to return. On my way back I heard rumours at half a dozen places that something really big was happening there. In the casements under the town wall it was reported that the hill had been wiped out. In the dug-outs a little further on I was assured it was the enemy that had been all killed while attempting an attack.

Moving up, I met the Great Man himself, the general commanding our army corps.

The commander of an army corps is not supposed to take any personal part in fighting. He is the thinking machine, the directing brain. But our own Great Man loved a scrap, and he found it very hard to keep out of one. A glance at his square jaw showed that he was a born fighter. And so this afternoon, taking a solitary A.D.C. as his companion, he had walked through the shell-torn fields to the brigadier's, to satisfy himself how things were going. He walked, because no one could ride along those fields in daylight and live. German snipers took care of that.

I found him at the brigadier's, keen and cheerful, with messages of praise for one and the other, and with a practical eye for details. "Don't you think that you are a very fortunate man," he said suddenly, turning to me, "to be here when something is happening?" And then he was off somewhere else along the line. Around the hill we thought a lot of our Corps Commander.

Hurrying up to the hill itself, I was just in time to see something of the final stages of the fight.

That morning the Germans had tried to strike back at us in force. The hill stood as the main barrier for a whole line of low-lying country, running many miles back. If Fritz could have seized it and held it, our line would have been dominated. He knew this as well as we did. That is why for close on two years he strove at

irregular intervals to get it from us, to blow the hill up, to shell us out, or to rush us off our feet. This is why every battalion which took over this point of the line understood, before moving out from the rest camp, that it was going to a place which it must not abandon whatever the circumstances. If there was only one man left on the hill, that man had to fight until he fell. "No falling back. No surrender!" were the principles here.

To-day's effort to take the hill from us was a serious one. There had been four hours' bombardment, in which the German batteries on three sides had poured every imaginable kind of shell, from ten-inch downwards, on us. Their bigger guns had been transferred a few days before to further down the line, and so could not be used. But what were left were very lively. They blew in our front trenches with "sausages" and "rum jars," crude, beastly, cast-iron contrivances that smash up almost anything in their immediate neighbourhood. They kept up a steady shower of shrapnel bursting just over the hill. A long distance heavy naval gun raked us at another angle. It was possible, by listening carefully, to distinguish the different kinds of shells; the instantaneous explosion of the "whizz-bang," which strikes home and bursts there almost as soon as it has left the muzzle of the gun; the rumbling, rotary motion of the heavy trench mortar, the "Minnie," the gentle whistling of the "heavy stuff" from a distant

battery, a whistling that ends in a monstrous crash. Now you could distinguish the one, now the other, and soon all combined in a terrific, almost continuous, explosion. The enemy did not have it all their own way. They had barely begun their bombardment before our batteries to the rear opened out on them, and as it became evident that their strafing was serious we brought our bigger guns into play. The artillery general boasted to me afterwards of the scores of twelve-inch shells that had been fired and of the hundreds of shells of smaller calibre. There is some "punch" in our gunners. The German lines all around the hill were smashed in. Every point from which gun fire seemed to come was fired at.

It lasted for four hours. What of the men on the hill itself? What was happening to them while the trenches were crushing and dug-outs were blocked and the entrance to the advanced dressing station filled in? Everything works on a system at a time like this. Front trenches are as lightly held as possible. All who can do so take shelter. But sentries must be posted to watch for enemy advances; certain dangerous points must be held, and a certain amount of inter-communication is necessary even when the shelling is heaviest. And so one man was caught here and another there. Of our little advance party, four out of five officers were knocked out, two of them being killed and two wounded, while the fifth was buried twice

by bursting shells. We had a little group of men out on a crater made by an old mine explosion; they were all shot down.

At the end of four hours a word of hasty warning went round. The Huns were coming out! It is depressing work waiting for hours in a dug-out or in a similar support trench doing nothing; but the moment the men knew that the enemy were going to storm our position every soldier became cheerful again. As the Germans came on, very slowly at first, sturdy, grey-trousered men, in their shirt sleeves, with their arms full of bombs or gun cotton, the boys wanted to cheer. Now our moment had come!

Sandy Mac, a big Western corporal, moved to his place as quietly as though four-hour bombardments were every day events. He was smoking a cigarette. He did not put it out. He stood seemingly careless, with his Lewis machine-gun, waiting for the moment. An Irishman got his sights right. A French-Canadian, a little further on, came to his place with a nervous gesture; but the finger on his trigger and the eye on his sight were without a tremor. Now was the moment when every man must depend on himself. No waiting for orders now!

The Germans still came on. As our rifle fire caught them they quickened their pace. Soon they were hurrying, almost running, towards our lines. You had to be careful not to slip over the body of a comrade who had fallen in the trench, for slips would be fatal now. Here

some had come so near that they were about to hurl their bombs. Sandy Mac had waited for this moment. His Lewis machine-gun gave a few kicking sounds, and the bombers were no more. Other men in grey were rushing up when our rifles spoke out. Still the men came on. One dropped like a punctured bladder; one twisted up; one reeled round. They were brave men on a hopeless task. Then came the culminating moment. Describe it! You cannot describe it. It was a flash of grey, a flash of light, a glimpse of tense faces, a continuous harsh, crude explosion from bombs and rifles. Two of the enemy leapt right in our trench, but as they leaped they fell, never to rise again. The impetus of their final rush had brought their bodies amongst us even after they were shot.

The attack was over and it had failed. All along the line the enemy were falling back. On our front every man had been killed or wounded. Now was the time to look around our own trenches, to take toll of our own casualties.

I half crept, half ran up to our side of the crater. Our trenches were, in part, levelled by the enemy shell fire, and had it not been that Fritz was so utterly demoralised we would have formed easy marks. Now one had to creep under a half-buried passage-way, now press on one side to avoid the still forms lying there. At last I reached the crater and plunged down in the half shelter at the side of it. I noticed that one young

officer there looked confused for the moment. "I cannot do it," I heard a subaltern murmur as he was called on to check the list of lost in his platoon. "They're all my own boys." I did not know for weeks afterwards the cause of the young officer's confusion. He thought, as I plunged into his shelter, that I was a German, and had his revolver raised to fire. They were expecting a fresh attack at any moment then. He only discovered his mistake as his finger had begun to press the trigger.

The subaltern recovered himself and set about his duty. The captain sat down and clenched his hands tightly to recover himself. His ears were singing. His head was splitting. You cannot be buried twice in a morning and dug out twice without feeling it. Then he gave his orders.

The advance had barely ceased before fatigue parties, crouching low, were trying to build up the broken trenches again. The bodies of the dead might wait till later. We found nearly all of them. Soon only one man was missing. At last we found a leg sticking out of a bank. A German shell had given him death and funeral at the same time.

For the moment we could move freely, even through our broken trenches, although all the sheltering parapets had been levelled, for our shells and our firing had knocked every bit of fight out of the other side. It was difficult to realise, as we were going round on our side, that

the survivors of the enemy just across the little dip were straightening out their lines in the same way.

I stumbled. "P—h!" the corporal of the advance post whispered. "They can hear us if we breathe here. Don't make a sound or there'll be half a dozen bombs among us." Our own bombers, half crouching with bombs in hand, stood waiting for the next move.

* * * *

The colonel's dug-out hummed with activity. The colonel himself was talking over the field telephone to the brigadier, arranging for fresh supports. The adjutant was busy writing orders. The mining officer had just reported that some suspicious sounds had been heard which suggested that Brother Fritz was going to try to blow us up. The orderlies brought in some food. The day had been a long one, and there had not been many opportunities to eat. The major cut off slices of tinned tongue and passed them round on tin plates. Tinned tongue and bread with good appetite is a food for the gods. Tea! Was ever such tea brewed as for this group of thirsty men! Even the memories of outside and the baking atmosphere of the close underground room could not affect us now. One after another snatched a few mouthfuls and went off to work waiting to be done. The dead were still to be brought in and further precautions must be taken against renewed attack.

We could hear the sound of an approaching shell. The Huns were beginning again, this time with "heavy stuff." There came a tremendous explosion in the dump close by. "That's their eight-inch long distance naval gun," said a captain. "Any casualties?" came the enquiry. Happily there were none.

Again came another shell, this time nearer—unpleasantly nearer.

"Damn!" said the adjutant, looking up from his writing as the bursting shell shook the place.

A young soldier came down the steps into the dug-out. A glance showed that he was the orderly-room clerk, as trim, as systematic, and as quiet as most of his kind. He stood to attention, and then held out a thick bunch of foolscap paper to the colonel.

"What's that?" asked the colonel sharply.

"To-day's returns and reports, sir," came the reply.

"God in heaven!" cried the colonel, moved for the first time out of his usual calm. "Am I, on a day like this, to have to go over a set of reports!" And then his sense of duty prevailed. He hastily cleared a bit of the rough table and set about perusing the papers put in front of him.

The heavens may fall, lines of trenches may be blown in by an unexpected mine, there may have been such fighting that only a remnant of the battalion is left, but you can safely calculate that at the first lull the orderly-room clerk will

be there with his reports to be initialled and passed.

3. VICTORY ON THE SOMME

THE battleground of the Somme has been so often described and so freely pictured that most people have a very exact idea of the broad sweeping uplands of Picardy, on which our great fight of 1916 was waged. And yet, when one stood for the first time on King George's Hill and looked, as far as the eye could reach, across miles of country that recently were German and now were ours, there came an uplifting of heart which no written description can convey.

In Picardy we were on the edge of a great success, and we knew it. Every man's soul was thrilled by the visible evidence of advance and of victory. The sight of German prisoners working on the roadways as one approached the fighting ground was tangible proof of our triumph. Our own wounded, making their way to the canal barges, wore the air of men who had done great and successful things for England. The soldiers in the rest camps had all of them tales to tell of trenches taken, of enemies slain, and of advances made good. In their haversacks they carried trophies, German post-cards, German tokens, bits of German shells, German war medals and ribbons.

Almost for the first time since the great days of the battle of the Marne we were fighting in an atmosphere of sustained triumph. The two

years of trench war had been in the main a time of costly endurance. We had paid heavily in men and had little to show for it. Our greatest triumph was that we had checked the German advance. The soldier had to summon all his strength of soul to endure cheerfully the monotony, the hardness, and the discouraging conditions of the entrenched front.

But here at the Somme the very atmosphere was different. Tommy sang. Old tunes had been revived, old choruses started afresh. Every battalion moved along with a swing, not merely the swing of disciplined march, but the swing of triumphant men who at last saw what they had long striven for coming within their grasp. This to me was in many ways the most arresting feature of the gigantic panorama of our southern battlefield.

Our position on the Somme was established on a base from many miles behind the front fighting line. Long before you reached Amiens you noticed the rear lines of the army. Village after village had been peacefully occupied by the British troops. The barns and the local factories were their workshops. They carried their accustomed ways into the heart of mid-France—their passion for cleanliness, their contempt for the local drinks, the thin beers and the ciders, their cheerful grumbling, and their unceasing love for tea. The peasant of northern France still thought the Englishman a bit mad, but on the whole he rather liked his madness. But he

asked, amazed, "Why is he ever throwing cold water over his face? He will wear his skin off."

As one drew nearer the lines, signs of the British armies grew. In Amiens itself khaki and the war blue-grey of France mingled everywhere. You were never allowed to forget that in the early days of the war Amiens was for a brief space held by the enemy. Beyond the city, in the direction of Albert, one entered the British base. Two or three miles out of the city you plunged into a new cosmopolis. Here was mile after mile of camps, all so well arranged and so linked up that it was difficult at first to realise their magnitude. The roads were full of lines of troops, of guns, and of commissariat waggons moving in opposite directions. But every movement of every regiment was so precisely timed that you could go right through the home of a million men and not be held up at any one point for more than three minutes.

Hard fighting may be going on a few miles ahead. But, according to the doctrines of the British Army, hard fighting in front is no reason why there should not be complete discipline behind. So, in the camps at the base, everything went on as usual. Here was a party of men marching off for their baths, each with his towel around his neck. Here was a battery of field artillery coming back after a very strenuous time. Now we passed a regiment going to rest after winning undying glory in Devil's Wood. It crossed another going out. They exchanged

greetings as they passed, not always polite greetings either. Here and there we noticed camps surrounded by barbed wire. These were German prisoners' camps. Soon we came on the prisoners themselves.

I met in one afternoon several hundreds of German prisoners at work on the roads. "Work" is rather a misnomer for what they were doing. They were standing about playing at work, some of them not even doing that. Here and there I saw a man laggardly lifting a road hammer and beating down a bit of chalk. Many were gossiping, many others were staring curiously at us. Some of them saluted, and some stood at attention, but most were stolid. They were all young, all well clothed, all well fed. They were undoubted evidence that, on this part of the line at least, the German Army was composed of neither weaklings nor cripples, and that it was well fed and well provided for.

Notice the condition of our own soldiers. For some hours, passing tens of thousands of men along the roadway, I carefully scrutinised them, trying to find a single untidy man, a soldier with torn uniform, with worn boots, a horse with broken straps, or the like. I failed to find one. It was as though the moment each section of our men came back from its turn in the front line fighting, it was gone over with minute care, and everything in the way of its equipment put right. I doubt if, since war began, there has ever been an army more perfectly equipped after

a period of heavy fighting than this army on the Somme. This applies to Imperials as much as Canadians.

The same evidence of minute care in detail was shown when one got beyond Albert. If it were not for the most minute planning the streets of Albert would have been hopelessly jammed with troops coming and going in and out. But each battalion passed and crossed in its order. Every road in the country beyond was wide enough for its work. As you moved further on you saw armies of men broadening the old highways, macadamising them and giving them foundation enough to stand their heavy loads, as though they would wipe out all traces of German occupation.

Here were groups of caterpillar traction engines, capable of drawing the heaviest load. Here was a new line of railway, broad-gauge solid track. A labour company, fresh from Lancashire, was working on the shattered and battered ruins of yesterday, straightening them up, bringing order out of chaos. It was very amazing, this systematic straightening out ceaselessly going on in country which we had only recently reconquered from the enemy. The whole proceedings gave the impression of enormous reserve power, of gigantic available strength, of organisation so great and so complex that while one section of it was directing the advance of the battalions on Gueudcourt and Morval many miles ahead, another section was recording the

number of yards of barbed wire taken from the enemy and directing how the guns and shells captured in the German lines should be moved to points where they could be turned against their old owners. There was a precision, an exactness, a mechanical perfection about the working of these details that gives one confidence.

In August, 1916, the three Canadian divisions, after long fighting in and around Ypres, were ordered south to take part in the Somme battle. The Fourth Canadian Division, under Major-General David Watson, arrived at Ypres about the same time that the first three divisions left, and it remained there for a few weeks before going south also.

We were all glad when we left the salient. Fighting on the Somme was hard and fierce enough, God knows, but fighting on the Somme, while it had its terrible hours, lacked the perpetual horror of the Ypres position. On the Somme you were normally out of the line of enemy observation. You could walk about freely. You could explore captured trenches without fear that a sniper was lying in a wood near to hand ready to pick you off. A shell might come, it is true, where you were, but the man who worried about chance shells ought not to have been in the fighting front. At Ypres it was never like this. There, save when you were at a rest camp, there was always the feeling that the enemy on three sides had you under their

survey and within the range of their machine-guns. On the undulating uplands of the Somme one breathed a different air, stimulating, inspiring.

The story of the battle has been so often told that one need not repeat it here. Who does not know how, in the early September days, the First Division, marching down from the north, flung two of its battalions into the line around Mouquet Farm to help the Australians, or the tale of the thirty-six hours of terrific struggle, when our boys, half sheltered in shell holes, hung almost by the skin of their teeth, the hours when Canadians and Australians fought side by side and won. The tale of Courcelette, of the charge of line after line, of the fight for the sugar factory, the desperate struggle for the shallow German trenches, and of the final triumph, is imperishably written on every Canadian memory. I do not wonder that some of the wounded at Courcelette, half delirious with pain, but yet able to move, crept up towards the "tanks" as they lumbered slowly back on that day, and stroked them and babbled over them, and spoke to them endearingly as if they were living things. They realised that mechanical genius had come to their aid to save some of the fearful slaughter of our men which advance in the past had too often meant.

To me the Somme battlefield appeared as a weird imagination, the uncanny phantasm of a nightmare, rather than as a reality. One saw

new batteries in process of making, twelve-inch guns moved and handled almost as though they were children's toys, gigantic, steel-girded structures in the hillsides, the use of which you would only imagine. One noticed on the horizon ahead a steady succession of bursting masses of black smoke ascending to the heavens, and one knew they were titanic enemy shells dropping on our front. Your ears were deafened by the sound, not of one, but of innumerable heavy-calibred breech-loaders firing all around. Not until you had heard this did you know what noise is. Here came something bursting in the wood to our right, a flash of light overhead, a puff of smoke. Fritz was turning his attention to this point. Someone said, "Poor old B—! A shell caught him while he was standing on the road, and blew him to bits." A week ago one would have been horrified. A week hence the news would create gloom. But to-day, amid the noise of the crashing shells, in sight and sound of ever-continuing battle, B—'s fate was taken as a matter of course. For here there came a strange intoxication, a deadening of some senses and acute magnifying of others. Death, wounds, mutilation, seemed commonplace. In truth, commonplaces here they were.

Britain and France in three months had captured close on 70,000 German prisoners! They had put close on 350,000 Germans out of action! They had driven the enemy out of three of the most strongly held and carefully defended lines

known in modern war! "We're knocking the stuffing out of them," said Tommy. And he was right. Our guns were better. Our men were better. We were accomplishing what, three months before, was thought to be impossible.

For close on two years we had been held up. Every attempt to break through the German lines had failed; just as every German attempt to break through our front ended in disaster for the attackers. The whole German revised scheme of war was based on the supposition that we could never get through their western lines. But now Combles and Thiepval, modern fortresses of the most formidable type, had yielded to us. To-day we had taken the German third line. Already our cavalry outposts were coming into touch with the enemy in some of the more open land. Already our horsemen were beginning to count the days when they would have free run in the open country with the enemy in front of them. Since July 1st the armies on the British front alone had smashed twenty-nine German divisions, and sent them, broken and decimated, with all the fight knocked out of them, back to the rear. It was not for nothing that the enemy were finding it necessary to call on their sailors in the north to come down and help to stem the Allied push.

In the end, as all the world knows, we did not accomplish all that we hoped. The high expectations of the autumn failed to be realised. The enemy was forced to retire over a great

sweep of country back under the highest protecting point, Cambrai; but there he held on. And yet I am convinced that the late autumn of 1916 saw us within an ace of a crushing military triumph. The great gains that we made were as nothing to the gains that just escaped us. Organisation, tremendous courage, great enthusiasm, the finest military effort ever seen since the beginning of the history of the world, an effort compared with which even the initial German advance into northern France at the beginning of the war takes second place, in the end was foiled by the weather. Rain, cold, mud, snow, proved greater than man. Our splendid reserves that should have been fresh for the final push had to be used up in the terrific fighting, heavier than any ever contemplated. When we had gained our great victories, and when we were ready to reap the full fruits of them all that was wanted was one fresh army corps for the final drive. But there was no further army corps to be had.

The Somme gained us great victories, but the victories we scored were nothing to those we nearly had, and that with the most ordinary luck we would have had.

The Fourth Division had the worst time at the Somme. Coming late from Ypres, it remained on the Somme for some weeks, late in the year, after the first three divisions had gone north again. The autumn rains had turned the earth, sifted by shell fire, into one great

quagmire. Trenches were little better than mud heaps. There was practically no shelter. The men lived in mud, and bitterly cold mud at that, wallowed in it, ate in it, slept in it, rested often enough with half of their bodies in freezing mud. They stuck in it and drowned in it. Some of the stories of the rescues from drowning by mud are as gruesome as anything I know. The very horses drowned in it. Guns got stuck, and the maximum teams it is possible to use effectively for guns could often do nothing to pull them out. Men had to be jerked up from the mud by jacks. Sometimes a man was pulled up, leaving half of his clothes behind; sometimes his back was broken as he was pulled out. And yet they stuck on and held on, for if we were suffering torments, the enemy were suffering worse, and the policy of holding on and fighting was justified, when, weeks later, the Germans made their big retreat to far beyond Bapaume.

4. THE WAY OF DEATH

I LEFT the Somme in the early days of the great fight. I did not get back there until months afterwards, following the retreat of the Germans beyond Bapaume. It seemed impossible then to realise that the long struggle had taken place on these muddied and broken fields and rising uplands. There was the usual débris of war, the wrecked tanks looking strangely desolate and lonely, the heaped ruins of the sugar factory, where the Canadians had fought

so hard; the trenches of Courcelette, the shell holes, the tangled wires, and the rest of it. You reached a village and found that all that was left was finely sifted rubble where the houses had been. You passed a church, or where a church once was. Only a notice was now left to tell that this was consecrated ground.

But along the great roads, making straight for Bapaume, there was still animation, numbers of troops working, many waggons passing to and fro. Before reaching these roads I travelled through one terrible district. It was the land of the dead, mile after mile without a sign of life. The very trees were burned and broken, limbless, lifeless and black. In most of the country there was not even a bird to be seen, for there was nowhere for birds to nest and nothing for them to feed on unless they were carrion. Innumerable trenches, British and German, ran across what had been old roads. These had been hastily filled in during our pursuit, but the filling in had been very quickly done, and there had not been much beating down of the earth. So the rains had come and the highways were full of rough gaps, over which it was difficult to travel. This was the old German front on the Ancre. The names of the places told their story, Gommecourt, Boucquoy, Beaumont Hamel.

After going about five miles we came on a wildcat tearing through the wires. Two miles further on my companion gave a shout. "A bird!

A bird!" It was a raven hovering over the fields of the dead.

Many of these bits of the front told their own story. Here, for example, was one sweep of ground where the Germans had been occupying one side of a valley and our own men the other. You could see half way over No Man's Land a number of little hastily dug single-man trenches. One could guess what had happened here. Our men had gone over the top, had been held up at one point by the German fire, had refused to retire, and had dug themselves in. I was not surprised when I got home and looked up my records to read that on this spot had been one of the most hotly contested parts of the 1916 front.

Big piles of German ammunition were heaped on the road sides. There were miles of vast masses of wire entanglements still untouched. The country roads, particularly on the old German side, were lined with dug-outs. The trenches were still full of the impedimenta of war. Here was a boot. Ugh! That Hun lost boot and foot at the same time.

There were crosses marking graves everywhere, often with dried wreaths on them. In other parts boots protruded through the mud, showing where there had been no time for proper burial, much less for placing crosses. Still further on there was abundant work for gravediggers yet to do. Dead!

There were enticing Hun souvenirs left all around, but one dared not touch them. All of

us knew enough tales of what had happened from booby traps not to be anxious ourselves to play the part of booby. When the engineers and pioneers had time they would come through here, cutting wires, isolating the charges and cleaning up. But for the moment all were too busy driving Fritz further back.

After a time we passed through the region of the worst desolation and reached the villages. Some of them had a corporal's guard. Some were wholly empty. Everyone is tired of hearing of ruins nowadays. Here they were—ruins fantastic, ruins gruesome, ruins wholesale. After a time the repetition of village after village, all in the same state of pulverisation, made an effect on one which no individual area of destruction alone could. Two things stood out in my memory specially. One was the fine agricultural machinery beyond repair. The other was the sites of churches that could only be distinguished by flags hoisted above them. The civilian population had entirely disappeared.

I began to understand better why it is that France pictures herself to-day as a land of mourning. Here we had a large stretch of country completely destroyed. The very land was, much of it, so poisoned by the chemicals of shells that one feared it would be useless for crops for generations to come. Happily our fears proved worse than reality. Thanks to the amazing work of the people, assisted by the armies, some of the most desolate and horrible

areas were brought back to cultivation within a few months. The villages were worse than merely swept away. They were left in a state of ruin that would mean immense work to clear. The trees in the forests, or what was left of them, were in many parts so torn by shrapnel and by machine-gun bullets that they were doomed to die. The countryside was full of unexploded shells and bombs. Many a man ploughing the land in years to come would, we feared, be killed by the striking of the fuse of a buried shell. Here again, however, the months that have since passed have proved that the deaths from this cause have not been nearly so great as was expected. Fears are traitors always, and often liars too.

From Albert to Bapaume the land was so torn up by shells as to seem permanently lost to civilised man. From Bapaume, however, much of the recovered country was excellent. The trees had been destroyed and culture would have to start from the beginning. But the land was sweet and wholesome. Some friends of mine had started a three-acre kitchen garden east of Bapaume. When I examined it, it was doing well.

It seemed to me then, and I have seen little reason to depart from my views since, that districts such as Courcelette and Beaumont Hamel would probably be best utilised by being turned into one great forest. France is losing many of her old fine woods. Let a new swarth of

timber arise over the land of the dead. And let the German prisoners clean up the land and plant it.

* * * *

I expressed some doubts about the stories I had heard of deliberate German destructiveness of gardens in the great retreat on the Somme and Ancre. A young soldier heard me with some impatience. "Come with me," he said. "I'll convince you in half an hour. I'll show you the château." And so we went to the château. It had the reputation before the war of being one of the most beautiful and luxurious country houses in France. It might have been called a palace.

It is situated in the village of Velu, some way beyond Bapaume. It is surrounded by woods that recall Fontainbleu. A long straight avenue leads to the house, and behind it is a great straight road through the forest, like one sees at Versailles. The house itself was quite modern. It was restored in 1893. It was built in one long front, with the house on one end, the stables, the motor houses, the domestic quarters, and the extensive gardens on the other. It was surrounded by the usual ornamental grounds. I can picture from the ruins, the beautifully wrought iron work, the decorative marbles and the like, what it must have been. "It was the second most beautiful château in France," one man told me.

The Germans, when they swept over this country early in the war, used the château as a hospital. They made the sloping lawn to the side of the house a twin cemetery for their dead. When they had to retire they blew the entire building up. That is not surprising. It is so much in keeping with their usual doings that one would not think such an incident worth describing, if that were all.

My companion took me to the extensive gardens of the house. There was no need to look at the greenhouses, they were shattered beyond repair. The main garden was devoted to fruit trees. Some of my readers will remember the fine display of French espaliers at a White City Exhibition in London a few years ago. Picture this multiplied a hundredfold, and with mature trees. The main avenue had an archway for fruit trees. The old red walls were covered with their branches. In an outer garden was an orchard of standard trees.

There were only a few leaves on them, and only a little flower. Here was a sprig of peach blossom; here a bit of pear. At first I could not understand the reason. Then I looked at the lower branches.

The trunk of every bush, without exception, had been cut or broken across. Sometimes a clean cut through was made by a fine saw, sometimes it was hacked in half, sometimes it looked as though some special kind of giant nippers had been at work. Apples, peaches, pears, a monster

grape vine, nectarines, apricots and plums, all were the same. Men had gone to work deliberately, systematically, thoroughly, to leave no tree alive. They had succeeded.

I am accustomed to ruins. I have seen so many wrecked villages and burned-out towns that one more or less doesn't seem to make much difference. But at the sight of this wreckage of a paradise of beauty—as it must have been—a white hate seized me. I could understand the feeling of a party of soldiers who visited the place a few hours before, and pledged themselves to execute punishment for the crime. "We're pretty rough ourselves, and we don't make a fuss over trifles," said one of them. "But by —, this is too much."

The German wounded must have benefited greatly from the fruit crops. Many of their dying men must have had comfort and relief from it. One would not envy them it. But then —this!

One little bit of wall of the house still stood. On it was a stone with an inscription:—

> Built by the Marquis de Couronnel
> in 1719. Restored by his last
> grandson, the Baron Goer de Herve
> in 1893.

I turned from the château to the German graveyard. There were crosses over the graves, some with crosses and palm leaves painted on

them. The inscription over the graves usually began, "Hier ruht in Gott." "Here rests in God." God!

I turned again to the house and wondered how they dared invoke His name.

* * * *

It was in the region between Bapaume and Cambrai that I saw something of the work of the Canadian railway builders. In the early days of the war the British authorities relied mainly upon heavy motor lorries for transport, and even what railways there were seemed to be comparatively little used. Those of us who are accustomed to the use of rails in the West were amazed with the utter waste involved in this method. One train can hold as much as two hundred motor lorries; it employs four men in place of four hundred; it saves money doing the same work for shillings that the motor transports do for pounds. Returning to England on one occasion from a prolonged visit to the front, a very high authority asked me my chief impression, particularly my chief critical impression. "The inefficiency of your transport," I told him, and I gave him my reasons for saying so.

Facts so obvious that they could be seen by mere laymen and outsiders were still more vividly realised by expert Canadian railway men. Some of the great railway builders of Canada returned, after visits to the front, amazed. Lord Shaughnessy, the head of the Canadian Pacific

Railway, obtained permission to raise a railway battalion from the Canadian Pacific Railway. Other Canadians followed. Mr. "Jack" Stewart, the famous British Columbian railway contractor, came over in khaki to help the work along. It was not, however, until Mr. Lloyd George intervened and forced Sir Eric Geddes on the military authorities to re-organise the transport that anything effective was done. From then real work was pushed on. The Royal Engineers, a part of the Imperial Army, did a great deal of work, and did it finely once they were allowed to go ahead. The Canadians took a prominent part with their railroad battalions, but the Canadian railway men would be the first to resent any claim to exclusive credit for the new railway policy. "The R.E.'s are doing their work well and are fine, live men," said one Canadian railway colonel to me one day, and he threatened me with horrors untold if I did not make this clear in anything that I wrote.

Mr. Stewart became brigadier-general in the railway corps. He is a man of silence. His motto is "See everything, hear everything, and keep your mouth shut." The railway workers have many tales to tell about his methods, his absolute simplicity, his hatred of advertisement or ostentation. It is said that, time after time, when battalions working on different parts of the line have been expecting visits from him, they have found that the general arrived in the early hours of the morning, quietly went over all their

was] sized up everything, and slipped aw
before anyone knew that he was there. But in
language of the West, "He knows his job." H
has is everywhere. His great gift lies
patiently planning every detail and mapping
whole of the thing out beforehand, so that
go through like clockwork.

I spent a very interesting day with one
the battalions of railway builders just behi
the front line. They were building a mile a d
of road-gauge railway. They had to keep
helmets and gas bags handy, for they were r
rail lines close up to the front. Much of th
work could only be done at night; were they
continue in daylight Fritz would have locat
them and shelled them out of existence.

Within a few hours after a fresh Brit
advance the railway workers make their appe
ance. They find bridges blown away, tra
obliterated, and booby traps everywhere. Heav
armoured locomotives haul up material. T
track is cleared, the craters made by Germ
explosions filled, fresh bridges thrown across
gaps, and, in an incredibly short time, here i
new route ready to hand over to the Railw
Operating Department.

The battalion I was with described itself
a Canadian Northern bunch." Among the r
railway corps are men who have planned a
pushed railways from Zambesia to Yucatan.
It has a motto it ought to be, "We wear no fri
and we do no fancy work. Get a move on

A canvas hut acted as headquarters. Typewriter, card index, and letter-file gave it a familiar air. The whole outfit could be packed into a box near by. There could be no question about these railway men doing their work under fire. While we were at lunch 9.4's came fairly steadily over our camp. Later on, when we reached railhead, things were lively. But the railway men are lucky. This battalion, working since the beginning of the year, had only lost one man killed and six wounded from shell fire.

"Our best sustained record," said the colonel, "is 4¾ miles in five days. We have just finished one bit of work. We had first to build a bridge 140 feet long. That was started on Friday and finished on Tuesday. Then we had to clear the track beyond, which was littered with German 'ties,' torn rails and other material. We started at six on Tuesday and had finished laying the line, 12,069 feet, by Wednesday midnight.

"We had 600 men clearing the road and 150 working on the steel, actually laying the rails.

"Twenty-two miles of light railway were put in the new territory at the Ancre River fight. It was this light railway that enabled ample supplies of ammunition to come up. When the Boche moved back the light railway was pulled up and standard gauge put in. We finished it the day before yesterday. The light rails will be used again to throw a line ahead, and so on."

And then he took me to see the new line and his railway soldiers. We drove under a bridge.

It consisted of strong timber flung across. "No waiting for cement parapets here," said the colonel. "We build a line as they build a pioneer line in the West."

The driver of the armoured engine was a Londoner from the G.E.R. But the construction battalion were practically all Canadians. They actually came to England not as a building battalion, but as a fighting battalion. But, consisting, as the battalion did of railway men, with four out of every five men and twenty-one officers engineers, mechanics or railway workers, the authorities turned them to more special use.

PART III.

WAITING AROUND MESSINES, 1915-16

1. BATTLE HEADQUARTERS

THE dullest man could not have failed to realise that there was something special in the air. As I made the rounds of the trenches with the senior officer there was a sense of suppressed excitement everywhere. We paused at one salient—the most dangerous on our sector, because German snipers from one distant part could enfilade it. When the captain in charge there heard that he and his men were to be relieved an hour later, even army discipline could not keep back his protest. "You are never going to take me away from here when there is something on, are you, sir?" he remarked. One would have imagined from his tone that he was asking for a spell of leave in "Blighty," in place of the privilege of staying twenty-four hours longer under almost constant fire.

A little further down the line we went in a dug-out, a real *pukka* dug-out, *à la mode,* with arched steel roof, just big enough to allow six of us, by close squeezing, to sit on the floor or on boxes, the sixth member of the party having to dispose of half of himself in the trench outside.

Here, with the aid of a burned cork and a candle, a boyish lieutenant was blackening his face as though for a negro show. Now a blackened face meant only one thing in the trenches—a raid on the enemy lines. Faces are darkened so that the white flesh shall not show up under the light of the Boche flares.

We discussed together, in that peculiarly detached fashion which seems to belong to trench life, the merits of different kinds of wire cutters and the advantage of the knobkerrie, the latest instrument of trench war, over the automatic pistol, the trench dagger, or the bomb.

Messengers frequently interrupted with, "You're wanted on the telephone, sir." The telephone impinges as much on the life of an officer in the trenches as it does on the life of a city man in Lombard Street. Quiet orders were passed around. "You will see that the outposts are withdrawn by ten o'clock." "Take your men in from the listening post." There were inquiries about trench mortars, machine-guns, and artillery. Routine organisation was at work. The sixty men standing at the back with their heads wrapped in Balaclava helmets and their faces darkened were only part of the machinery of that night's business.

"We had better go along to battle headquarters," said the cheery major. "Once the Boches get hurt they will strafe us tremendously. You can follow everything that's happening much better there than here." And so we went

down the lines, the clumsy amateur occasionally slipping his foot outside the trench boarding into a mud hole. The Boche flares thrown frequently into the sky gave sudden bursts of illumination, followed by what seemed blacker darkness than ever. The Boche bullets flying overhead sounded like the cracking of a cowboy's whip, for we were very close to the enemy lines. My guide paused to explain the different notes of the occasional gunfire, the distinctive call of our own 18-pounders, the great voice of "Little Mary," and the more ominous sound of German shells. It was a very quiet night really, and there was far less firing than usual. I have no doubt, however, that a man who stood in the trenches for the first time might well have imagined he was seeing war at its height.

Battle headquarters! The brain-box of the fighting!

Picture to yourself a little underground apartment with a concealed approach. Outside a few men were standing, making themselves as inconspicuous as possible. These were the runners, who know every line and every trench, and who could tear along in the darkness as though in day time. Should the telephone be cut by shell fire—always a possibility—they would at once be called in. They were one and all of them ready to go anywhere, to rush through enemy fire up to our storming parties during an attack, or to take short cuts across shell-searched open ground. They stood very

quietly, looking rather cold despite their warm clothing, and a little bored. It was a wet, windy night, by no means the most agreeable for waiting hour after hour in the open.

Inside the little bomb-proof room was a scene whose very quietness gave a touch of the dramatic. In one corner two telephone operators were working at a small table, each with a receiver clamped over one ear. They were presiding over a temporary exchange. Behind them sat their supervisor, a corporal, a big, quiet, capable man. He rarely raised his voice above a conversational tone, but we soon discovered the measure of the man. When there came a difficulty at one point of the lines he had it located and righted in a minute. Later, when some outside operator kept "butting in" with unnecessary questions he leant over to the table. He talked into the telephone mouth for about a minute, quite gently, but with language whose scathing incisiveness was worthy of the West he came from. I could picture to myself the operator at the other end scorching under it.

The colonel in command had arrived. Ours, you see, was a mere battalion raid, a little affair that, if it were successful, might have a line or two in official headquarters' reports. Our colonel learned his business in the West, and if you want to know what he did in the days before the war the records of the North-West Mounted Police will tell you. To-night he was after bigger game than hunting outlaws in the Yukon

or suppressing "blind pigs" along the Pacific coast. But the lessons he once learned tracking bad men and big beasts around the Rockies were standing him in good stead now. Seated around were the major, the adjutant, an artillery officer, and one or two others.

It was too light yet to move forward, and the colonel took advantage of the pause to hurry out himself to the trenches and take one final inspection of everything. Meanwhile the telephone was at work. Every wire had been re-tested. Every station—from the foremost salient to brigade headquarters—had been called up. Every arrangement had been made for a breakdown. One heard instructions rapidly repeated between our exchange and the ordinary headquarters. "If J. 3 gets cut, connect me up through J. 5. If you can't make that connection, try ——," and so on. Some one had brought in an acetylene flare, and now that it was alight we could see one another fully. The strong-jawed Nova Scotian sitting opposite to me at the telephone exchange was busy all the time. Were I to have shut my eyes I could almost for a moment have imagined myself in an office at home. "Cut out that buzzing," he snarled to some one at the other end. "Cut out that buzzing, quick. We can't hear what's going on." "You there, at the other end, are you asleep or what? Answer the wire quicker." Telephone troubles are not confined to home exchanges!

By midnight the weather was right. I peeped outside, across the muddy desolate country; not a speck of light was to be seen save when the flares were up. The heavy rain beating across the fields made it just the weather we wanted.

A last word over the wire. The colonel has taken the instrument in hand himself now. "Captain Dash," one heard him say. "Report to me every quarter of an hour how you are getting on." Fresh word was sent to the machine-guns and to the artillery, where men were standing in the dark waiting by their weapons. "You are not to fire, whatever happens, until word comes from us," they were told.

Now came the long deadly wait. Remember that our Nova Scotian boys out on this raid were engaged on as desperate an enterprise as could well be imagined. Silence, darkness and secrecy were essential. Let one of the men crawling up on their stomachs towards the German lines so much as cough, and probably not one would get back. Possibly the Germans suspected our move, and had set a trap, and were just waiting for our lads to expose themselves, when they would overwhelm them with machine-gun fire. That is what happened the same night on just such another expedition as this a little further down the line. I glanced furtively at the colonel's face. He was sitting quietly and keeping himself well in hand, but the lines on his forehead seemed deeper than

they had been an hour ago. Had he been able to go out himself he would have gone like a schoolboy on holiday, but to wait in this fashion while the fate of his comrades hung in the balance was a hard task.

We tried to keep our minds from thoughts of that creeping line. The adjutant recalled one soldiers' chorus and the telephone supervisor reminded him of another. We started talking of the technical side of the war. Some one asked the man from London for news of other fields. But it was empty kind of talk, all of it. Our hearts and minds were somewhere else, and soon even the attempts at conversation died down. The colonel looked at his watch every now and then. Fifty minutes and no word! He had inquired several times by telephone along the outposts if anything has been seen of the pioneers or anything heard of them. "Ring up J. 13," he called. "Tell Captain —— he is to send out a man along the front to enquire." There came a call from brigade headquarters wanting to know how things were going on, and a message about a similar raid at another point.

At last there was word. The colonel took the instrument in hand. Our men had half cut the wires, but a German working party had appeared on the opposite trenches, and if they attempted to go any further they would be discovered. "Tell them to conceal themselves and lie low as quickly as possible," the colonel ordered. Then he turned to the operator. "Give me

such and such a number,"—the number of the machine-gun battery. "In ten minutes open fire on such and such a parapet." We sat waiting, and a few minutes later through the silence of the room we could hear the dull clatter of our machine-guns as they swept the German front. Our boys could go on with their work now!

Another long wait! An occasional report of slight firing. Ever-growing anxiety that seems as though it would eat men's hearts out. The Boches could not have discovered our advance or we would have heard the sound of their fusilade. What in heaven's name has happened? The hours were creeping on now; daylight would soon begin to appear. To us the long drawn-out tension was bad enough. What must the long night have been to the waiting soldiers?

Here comes more news. Another obstacle! This is a more serious one. Our men have come on a strand of wire so thick that they cannot cut it. More talks on the telephone. Now we ring up brigade headquarters, and the general is roused from his sleep for a consultation. Fresh plans are advised and another attempt made.

Were I writing an imaginary description, we would, of course, have succeeded. Our lads would have got into the German lines, and would have swept them clear, coming back with many prisoners. This is what we had done before. This is what we hoped to do now. But in war

the most careful preparations and the most elaborate precautions cannot ensure success. You must venture time after time for one real gain. To-night the stars were in their courses against us. The delays had proved fatal, and before our move could be completed the lightened skies of the early morning would reveal our pioneers to the German sentries.

"Call in the advance," the colonel ordered. "Pass round word to the batteries. It's rough luck on you, old man, to bring you here for nothing. But stay over to-morrow night, and we will do the trick."

Then we stretched ourselves down on the floor of the little dug-out for a brief rest until dawn came.

2. TEA IN A DUG-OUT

THE SONG OF THE BRIGADE.

(Air—"The Little Grey Home in the West.")

There's a shallow wet trench near Messines,
'Tis the wettest there ever has been,
There are bullets that fly,
There are shells in the sky,
And it smells like a German "has been."

My dug-out's a haven of rest,
Though it's only a tumbled-down nest,
But with "Johnsons" around,
I must keep underground,
Till the golden sun sinks in the West.

A broken farmhouse!

Everything about it spoke of old-time prosperity. The red brick barns were spacious. The home was built on a noble scale. The stables and the sheds for agricultural machinery were sufficient for 600 acres.

Now as I picked my way through the torn courtyard, I was faced by a picture of sheer desolation. The roofs were rent asunder, and showed the light of heaven through numerous ugly gaps. The walls were half torn down and the floors in fragments. One roof was riddled as if a thousand splinters of shell had spent their force on it. I looked inside the rooms. While it was still possible to live in this place, an infantry regiment had been here. They numbered an artist and a poet in their ranks, and these had amused themselves in the intervals of fighting by drawing frescoes on the walls, and by writing rhymes across them. On one wall was a boldly outlined picture of a dainty lady. On another were patriotic views, battleships, great generals, the King, and the flag. The shells had spared the lady, but they had smashed the patriotic pictures to atoms. The song which I quote at the top of this chapter was written in bold handwriting at the side of the fireplace.

"The shallow wet trench."

A few hours later I found myself entering the trenches again, this time on a visit to one of the most famous Western Canadian regiments. It was about the time when the "afternoon

hate" was on, and when our own batteries were exchanging their periodical duel with the Germans. We could see, as we crossed the hilltop and crouched low over one somewhat exposed section of the roadway, the sudden puffs of blackish-brown smoke on the German lines, telling where our own shells had fallen. A minute later we were in the communicating trenches themselves, the long lines bending in innumerable right angles, in which a stranger could get lost as easily as a countryman could be lost in the heart of London. It was a long walk to the front, and the close atmosphere made the distance seem twice as great. A few wasps were waiting with their stings to liven us on the way. At one angle, oddly enough, a blackberry bush had been left, and, despite the numbers of men constantly passing there, one blackberry, fully ripe, still glistened above. At another corner, thanks to the sloping ground, it was possible to study with ease the long grey line of the German trenches beyond.

The colonel met us as we entered his lines —a straight-built, clean-cut, young British Columbian. He had been a newspaper proprietor in the far-distant days—the days before the war. Now he was one of the only two original officers of his regiment left, and both of them had been wounded. He himself had only returned the day before from hospital to take over the command of the regiment. He did not tell me this himself, let me add.

There was a movement of troops in the front lines of the trenches. "Come in and have some tea," said the colonel, and in we went to the officers' mess. To those who know the army in peace time, the words call up views of luxurious and club-like rooms, where every comfort abounds. This officers' mess was a little room dug out of the clay soil, with an entrance through a very narrow trench in which two men could scarcely pass one another, furnished with a rough wooden table and rough wooden seats.

Our host called for tea. Then a serious problem arose. There were six of us seated around the little table, and a careful search revealed that only five enamelled iron mugs could be found. Someone proposed that the mess president should be court-martialled on the spot for neglect of duty, but even the problem of five mugs for six people lends itself to easy solution, and in no time we were enjoying the tea and the bread, the tinned jam, and the tinned butter.

I have heard from many quarters of the luxuries enjoyed by officers in the German trenches—of the electric-lit dug-outs, the mirrors, the comfortable furnishings, and so on. I have seen a number of them. There is nothing of this on our own fronts. The officers' food in the trenches is chiefly noted for its simplicity. Their dug-outs are plain and hard, and their food is what their orderlies like to give them. The privates in the ranks live, in the trenches, as a rule, much better than the officers. Men in the

ranks will scoff at this, but I've shared both their meals, and I know. The men carry eggs and bacon, chops and potatoes, in their haversacks, and I have more than once witnessed them cooking glorious meals in their canteens over half-hidden fires. The officer has something else to think of than food while he is guarding his sector. For the days that he is there he has to be perpetually on the *qui vive*. When he is back in the rest camp he will eat in comfort; now in the trenches he eats what comes first, without a second thought. No British soldier can say that his officers do not share all the hard things to the full. Sometimes they have more than their shares.

It was over our mugs of tea that we got talking of the psychology of war. "The real problem of defence and attack is to get behind the minds of your enemy," said the commander. "You must discover what they expect and then do something else. For instance, if you fire indiscriminately upon them, they creep into their dug-outs, and wait in safety until the firing is over. They know what you are about and do not worry. But once you get them guessing, you have won half the battle."

Our talk turned to the problem of courage and cowardice. "I have learned one lesson in this war," said one of the most experienced officers in our party. "Courage does not depend on outward appearances. You can have a man whose voice trembles, whose hands shake and

who is perspiring from inward apprehension. Yet he may go straight at the enemy, and keep on till the end. Trembling hands and shaking voice cannot be avoided by some soldiers. They mean nothing. The man of nerves, highly-strung nerves, is often like the good-blooded racehorse. He goes on and on and on. He only breaks down when strength is absolutely exhausted, but then he really collapses. So long as he can drag himself forward, he goes on. He realises his danger, and he knows what he is up against, but his spirit carries him through. I myself think a great deal more of this type of man than I do of the stolid, unfeeling variety.

"Have I ever had a case of cowardice? Yes, once, and I cured it. We were in a period of very heavy fighting, and one day one man came to me crying. 'Colonel,' he said, 'let me go back. I have done my best; I cannot stand it any more; I am all broken up. It isn't my fault. I have done all I could. Let me go, Colonel, let me go.'

"I looked at him. He was a strapping giant, and had been, so far, a good soldier. I felt sorry for the man, for I knew that he had done his best. But to yield an inch to him would have been ruinous to the spirit of the regiment. 'Brown,' I said to him (his name was not Brown), 'you have got to go through with it. Take this letter to the officer commanding the front line. Get his receipt, and bring it back to me. You will very likely be shot in doing it, but you will

certainly be shot as a coward if you don't go. Now be off with you.'

"I was called to another section of the line, and when I came back I found that Brown had returned; he had delivered the message and brought back the receipt. I sent for him to congratulate him. I found him still in the same broken mood. 'Let me go, Colonel, let me go,' he pleaded. 'I sent for you to congratulate you,' I said. 'I withdraw my congratulations. You will take another message to the front. If you are not cured then, you will take another and another and another, until you get your nerve back again.' It was hard, but there was nothing else for it. That man is to-day fighting in the ranks of our regiment and doing his work as well as any man there."

Then our talk turned to the possibilities of advance and to the methods of approaching the German lines in the darkness and of scouting in the few score yards between the opposing trenches. One of the most exciting and perilous pieces of work is to creep out underneath our wire and to move stealthily forward close to the German positions. There was one spot where our men, wriggling forward on their stomachs with infinite craft, could get within thirty yards of the German position and could actually see into some of the German trenches and hear the men talk. Two nights before my visit, one corporal crept right up to the German trenches, felt their wires, tested their alarm

bells, secured a trophy—an iron horseshoe that had been seen hanging in front of the German position—and got back in safety. The Germans were doing the same against us all the time. Once our lookouts remarked on a slight movement among certain rushes at the same time each day. A number of picked men from our ranks crept out, surrounded the rushes, and bagged a little party of Germans.

In this great game of scouting, a game in which the stakes are one's life, and in which the dice are all heavily loaded against one, the Canadians come out well. The men from the West, the hunters from the North, the pioneers and the trappers from the Rockies, have learned by years of experience how to push forward unseen and unheard, despite the sharp eyes of the game of the hills. They know how to lie for hours without a stir, unmoving and invisible, merged in the landscape. Tricks and ways that the townsman has to learn with difficulty are familiar knowledge to them.

Our talk was interrupted at this point by an eager young officer rushing in. "We have got a Taube, sir," he said to his colonel. "Our artillery are shelling it badly. She is trying to get back, and it looks as though she'd fall in our lines before she gets through." In a moment we were out of the trenches, standing in the open, watching a thrilling spectacle. A great German aeroplane, trying to scout over us, had come under the full fire of our anti-aircraft

guns. Shell after shell was bursting, as it seemed to us, all around her. Every moment we expected her to come hurling down; every moment the brave man—for brave he certainly was—at her steering wheel was guiding her further and further away. "That shell got her!" one exclaimed. But it didn't. It seemed impossible that the Taube could live another minute in that inferno of splendidly directed shells; yet somehow she escaped us. Soon it became clear that if she fell now she would fall among her own people.

There was a sigh, half of disappointment, half of admiration for the men, enemies though they were, who had done so well. Then one of the senior officers spoke out, "If any of you are in a hurry to be killed, you had better stay here a minute or two more. We are in full view of the German guns, and they will certainly open out on us if we keep where we are. I am going into the trenches again."

3. KNOBKERRIE

My friend paused in the midst of his toilet. He was dressing for an attempted raid that night. He adjusted his bulky person to the somewhat cramped corner of the dug-out and picked up a strong ash stick, a little over two feet long, with a bulge at one end, made, apparently, by slipping a serrated steel wheel over it. "This is the best of all weapons when you come to close quarters," he said, with a note

of admiration for it in his voice. "It beats the automatic, and it beats the trench dagger. It makes no sound and it gives no warning. By the time you have gone through the Boches with it you still have all your bombs to spare to throw on their reserves when they attempt to rush you. Give me the knobkerrie all the time."

Knobkerrie! A South African name for a native club! Old soldiers will recall it from the days of Boer fighting. In this war of 42 c.m. guns and trinitrotoluene, of 90 h.p. aeroplanes and wireless telegraphy, we have adopted the weapon of the primitive man, the club. It has many merits. It is silent. You can wipe out a trenchful of men with it on a stormy night and their friends fifty yards away will not know that anything has happened. You can calculate your blow so as to stun in place of killing, thus enabling you to bring back a group of prisoners whose information may be of the greatest service. In war, prisoners are of real value. They may say something. They will probably attempt, with worthy patriotism, to deceive you and trap you completely. But their very lies and their very silences have a real value for the experienced intelligence officers who overlook them.

The knobkerrie was making history. The winter had witnessed a series of raids all along our lines in which it had been the principal weapon, raids that had kept the Germans on constant tenterhooks and had yielded us many small triumphs. I call them small, because even

the most enthusiastic advocate of night raids does not profess that they can vitally affect the operations of the war. But anything which keeps Heinie uneasy and keeps our own men alert is good.

This latest form of raid owed its origin to a realisation of the fact that trench warfare is essentially a case of brains against brains. Here brute courage counts for little. The man who has courage and nothing else gets killed rather earlier than is necessary; and that is all there is for him.

Think of the problem. Here we have the lines of British and German trenches separated by No Man's Land, which varies in width from forty yards to two hundred yards. This No Man's Land is largely occupied by dense masses of wire entanglements. In some cases the Germans have double lines of tangled wire, with strands running through them as thick as bars of iron, making a mass forty-two feet deep. During daylight the whole of this front is closely watched by snipers, whose rifles are fitted with telescopic sights, picked marksmen, who know every inch of ground in front of them. Even if the reeds in the marshes bent a little differently from usual, the snipers would note it. One cannot show himself in No Man's Land outside the listening post during the daylight and live.

At night men on either side creep forth through special openings in the trenches. Sentries take their places lest the enemy should

try to attack under cover of the darkness. Flares are thrown constantly into the sky, lighting up all around. At the first sound of the hiss of the flare, every man in No Man's Land drops down and lies quiet. If he is too late to do that, he stands absolutely still, so that he may not be distinguished. If the enemy make out the outlines of his figure a sniper's rifle or a machine-gun settles his fate.

Every battalion has its stories of this nightly fighting, of English and German coming suddenly face to face, each surprised by the other, each suddenly engaged in deadly grip. There can be no niceties of war here. If you catch sight of your enemy you have to kill him as quickly as you can, with the certainty that if you don't, he will kill you.

How could it be possible to cross No Man's Land, break through the enemy's wire entanglements, and penetrate the Hun trenches without the Germans suspecting our approach? There is, of course, the familiar way adopted for big advances, to break the wire entanglements down by a sustained, tremendous shell fire. There is a second way, to run a mine under them, explode it, and rush through the passage thus cleared. Some simpler plan was wanted, and a simpler plan was found.

A whole new plan of attack was elaborated down to the most minute detail. I must leave you to imagine the men moving out from our front on a stormy night, specially clothed,

specially armed, gliding through No Man's Land scouting with the skill of Red Indians, and after possibly hours of work, coming up to the German front. They have done it, time after time. They have done it to time, too! On the night of one of the great attacks two parties were launched out against separate points of the lines. They were faced by a very difficult German front. Nowhere were the German entanglements more formidable than here. The two parties made their attack within fifty seconds of one another.

The sentries along the German ramparts are not usually a great difficulty. Fritz is often enough a sleepy man on sentry duty. Tommy thinks Fritz rather stupid. Picture to yourself how, when the way has been made and our supports have come up, a group of our soldiers fling themselves upon the German trench, flashing blinding lights in their face, silently dealing heavy blows, bowling down one after the other with their club sticks, sweeping through the enemy before they had time to recover from their surprise. Every second is precious now. The trench must be cleared, all possible prisoners captured, machine-guns destroyed, bombs taken off and trench mortars rendered useless before the word that anything has gone wrong has passed along the German lines. In a few seconds the Boches' strafe will begin, and artillery, machine-guns, and bombs will concentrate here from all points.

One of the heroes of this kind of fighting was a captain of the 27th Canadian Battalion. He fought, not with knobkerrie, but with an automatic pistol. Holding his weapon to his hip he fired three clips from it—twenty-four shots. Then, heavily pressed, he flung the empty weapon into the face of a German rushing at him, grasped a bayonet from the German's hands and fought with it. When the moment came to fall back, he stepped out of the trenches with his men, bleeding from many points, but smiling, When they reached their own trenches they discovered that he had ten wounds on him.

Tales like this do more for the spirit and the morale of an army than a hundred tamer ventures. On another occasion our men, having raided a trench, were temporarily cut off, when coming back with several prisoners, by a German patrol, which had moved between two lines of German entanglements. These came to a quick fight, and it was not the Canadians who were left in the ditch. More than once the raiders have only covered their retreat by the quick use of bombs against heavy storming parties of the enemy attempting to attack them through the communicating trenches.

The theorists who imagined that the war of the future was to be a war of machines, in which engineers presiding over mechanically-directed monster weapons of destruction were to win the day, left out of account the work of the knobkerrie. Here individuality has play. In

this trench war we have all the attributes of desperate endeavour, of tremendous risks, and of personal alertness and valour which made knighthood what it was.

I hail the knobkerrie!

4. NIGHT IN THE TRENCHES

NIGHT in the trenches is the time for work. In daylight there is a lull. The lines are held as lightly as possible. No man shows his head for more than a second or two over the parapet, unless he has a consuming desire for death. Only the most necessary work is carried out, for while light lasts enemy artillery is most busy, enemy snipers are on the alert, and enemy aeroplanes make constant attempts at attack from overhead.

But when darkness comes the real work begins. Reliefs arrive, and the battalions that have done their spell in the trenches move out. Supplies are brought up from the base, and listening in the chance silence between firing you can hear the rumbling of the military trains. Work on the parapets is carried out, and No Man's Land, the fighting space between ourselves and the Boche, is explored. Great ventures are attempted or resisted. From sunset to dawn every man is on the alert every moment, for no one knows at what time the enemy may attack. The outposts beyond our lines, the men lying low at the listening posts, the sentries gazing out into the darkness from our front are signs of the vast watch and ward maintained along every foot

of the five hundred miles from the North Sea to Switzerland.

We approached the front under cover of the growing dusk. An aeroplane battle was going on overhead. A British biplane was attempting to return after a voyage of reconnaisance over the German lines, and the German artillery had opened out on it. The heavens above were pierced with sharp circles of greyish-brown smoke and stabbing flashes of light, as the enemy's shrapnel burst almost immediately above us. "We must push on," said my companion. "The line of fire is coming our way." But it seemed difficult to believe, despite the noise of the German guns, that those little flashes of light away up in the sky could carry any possible danger for us.

It was already dark by the time we reached the communicating trenches, the long line of zagged narrow earthways leading to the front. Every now and then a sentry's short question rang out, "Who goes there?" Every now and then a few men would pass us. I was interested to note how my companion scrutinised every man. Even the sentries who challenged us were not taken for granted, and when the countersign had been exchanged a short friendly question would be put. Our officers take no chances about German spies in the trenches. Some of the stories they could tell you in every dug-out would show that the precautions are not needless.

Here we are in the dug-out of the captain in

command of our sector. Stoop low and come in. Note the dug-out carefully, for it is the latest type. Our early dug-outs were very poor affairs, and if I were to judge from some of the pictures of dug-outs which I see in English magazines to-day, some are very poor affairs still. I myself have more than once seen one of them collapse under ordinary shell fire. This one we are in to-night, however, will stand anything but a direct hit from a "Jack Johnson," and might even give fair resistance then. It is drained and dry. Its steel roof is so shaped as to present the most effective resistance to a direct blow. The parapet above it is thick. There is a telephone in one corner communicating with battalion and brigade headquarters.

You can hardly describe the place as luxurious. We have to crouch down as best we can. A box forms the table, and for seats we have the floor or smaller boxes. The captain is just beginning his evening meal, and he invites us to join him. There is tea—the finest of trench drinks. "We drink tea day and night here," says he. There is toast made by the batman, tinned butter, and —a great luxury in our honour—a can of pears. With enamelled cups and tin plates we have a feast fit for kings. The candles on a box light up our little group. Every man is wearing rubber waders up to his thighs. Every one of us is muddy and wet, but mud and wet are such familiar features of trench life that you do not notice them. Outside the rain is beating into

the trenches, the bullets of the German snipers are cracking overhead, and the flares are lighting up the darkness of the skies. Inside we might fancy ourselves for the moment holiday makers caught in a storm.

Ours is what is known as a lively sector, where both sides are constantly busy. We are always attempting something against the Boches, and the Boches, to give them due credit, are generally trying something against us. Not long ago, for instance, they blew up one of our trenches, not two hundred yards away, with a mine, killing eighteen men and wounding thirty-four men. We have more than once done worse to them. To-night there are signs that their miners are active again.

The captain has sent for the mining officer, a young engineer from Eastern Canada, in charge of the underground operations here. Our observers heard three faint sounds like the suction of an underground engine some hours ago. The captain himself distinguished some faint noises. What do they mean? "If the Boches are cutting a mine they are doing it at a devil of a rate," he says.

The mining officer arrives, loosens his waterproof, seats himself on a box and listens quietly to it all. He puts a question or two. I know the type of man, the long face, big placid eyes, the immense reserve of strength familiar to most of us who have seen mining engineers who carry out risky operations in Australia and in the

West. Here is a man who is accustomed to fight death underground in New Brunswick and in Nova Scotia. He is only fighting death in a somewhat different form in Flanders. "Probably it's rats," he says placidly, continuing to puff at his pipe. Rats are a great nuisance here, as they are all over this part of the line. "But I will look into it and try to locate the sound." The noise apparently came from just below where we were. If it proved to be a mine we would move ourselves from that spot for a time, and our own miners would run a counter shaft above the German position, charge it with aminol, which explodes downwards, and would blow the German gallery in beneath them. That is, of course, provided we were in time.

Tea finished, we leave the captain and move a little further on. Here is another dug-out, with half a dozen officers, all of them Scotch-Canadians. You can hear more broad Scotch and more Highland lore in some of these trenches in half an hour than you would in Glasgow in half a year. Out of twenty-two officers in this battalion nineteen bear Scotch names. One of them was a Baptist minister in the days before the war. They say that he made a first-class parson in the old days; every one is agreed that he makes a first-class fighting man to-day. His officer commanding enquired of him recently if he would like to be an army chaplain. If it had not been for military discipline he would have shaken the C.O. for the suggestion.

We are in the front lines now, at a salient forty yards from the German trenches. "Quietly here," comes an almost whispered direction. "If we make any noise they will throw a bomb or two among us." The sergeant in charge at this point urges caution. "They have a demon of a sniper on to-day," he says. "He is just whipping the tops of the parapets with his bullets all the time. If you show your finger up he will take it off. We tried to bag him to-day, but he has a steel protection that gives him the bulge on us. We are going to have the artillery on him to-morrow." And as though to support the sergeant's words there come constant short cracks in the air, the sound of bullets from the man lying sheltered forty yards off, seeking us.

Gazing over the parapet towards the German position from another point one sees nothing but a vast dark tangled mass. Now a flare from the German lines enables us to distinguish something more. That line ahead we know to be a mass of wire entanglements. Those half revealed blurs on the ground are bodies that have lain there for long, and that no man can reach. There has been many and many a fight during the last fifteen months in this space ahead. These are what is left from them.

One knows that twenty or thirty yards off or more beyond the shelter of our own earthworks, our men are moving out, listening for the approach of Germans, trying to discover what they are doing, and seeking a way to them. All

night long this work is kept up. It is like the innumerable tentacles of a great animal, stretched out to feel what is before it. Sometimes a tentacle gets cut off. A flare rises unexpectedly before the soldier in No Man's Land has done moving, he stumbles, or the enemy sights him first. Then comes the rattle of a machine-gun or the ping of a bullet, and all is over. The hunter of the one hour becomes the hunted of the next. And so the game goes on.

Let us move a little way back to the advanced dressing station. One of our men has just been wounded. The Boche sniper who will have the great honour of being made a mark for our artillery to-morrow morning has returned another victim. It is not a serious wound, only a bullet through the muscle of the arm. The man's coat sleeve has been cut off, and he stands holding out his arm to be bandaged as steadily as though on parade. He is smiling a grim, stiff smile. As the bandage is pulled tighter he jokes with his mate standing by, and his mate jokes back. "Sorry, old man, this wound is not bad enough to take you back to 'Blighty,'" his comrade says. And then everybody laughs, the wounded man most of all. This is typical of the atmosphere of these front lines. High spirits, good temper and cheerfulness are the rule. Here human nature is taxed to the full. Mud and wet are the familiar surroundings, and death is a constant companion. The very fields around are overcharged with human bodies. Every time we

take a new trench, every time we explore a fresh bit of ground, new piles of trophies are brought in, sorry trophies—the last letters of soldiers, carefully preserved and sent back to their friends, broken mausers, old British army rifles, and the like.

Three days ago a German shell caught two of our men as they were sitting waiting in the trench. Yesterday an old dug-out, one of the few left, was blown up by a big shell. Even to-night, a quiet night, the rifle grenades and bombs are dropping in. No one ignores these things, but the man who allowed them to affect his spirits would not stay here long. Trench life brings a serene fatalism of its own. What has to be will be! Why should we let the mere possibilities of the future darken our lives to-day? And so one finds here at the worst point of the line the most cheerful men.

The night hours go slowly. After a time the human brain refuses to respond to mere sound. The first time a bullet cracks over your head you do not like it—nobody does. The fiftieth time you do not think of it. It is not that you like it the more. Your brain refuses to respond to its note. Use accustoms men to anything.

The night is passing. It is now just before dawn. The "Stand to Arms" has been called, and every soldier is waiting at his post, for now the hour has arrived when enemy attacks are most likely. But there is to be no enemy attack to-night. Dawn comes, and soon the aeroplanes

are on flight overhead again and the guns are once more searching the skies, seeking their prey.

5. NO MAN'S LAND

"WHAT!" said the colonel incredulously, "you have never been in No Man's Land! Come now, that's too bad. Go with the captain to-night." And the colonel proceeded to take his turn in the game of throwing rings on iron nails jutting out of the sand-bagged wall, in which he was handsomely beaten by a young subaltern.

It was the brief pause before dinner. German shells were making the evening hideous, searching with Teutonic thoroughness a wood a little way behind us. The Hun had been rather more active than usual, and had been sending quite a number of "sausages" around our front lines, while his heavier guns had been at work further back. "Fritz is peeved to-night," said the major. The average soldier will no more admit that enemy artillery fire is heavy than the average officer on a liner will admit that the sea was rough. "Call this a storm!" sneers the Atlantic captain when the fiddles are on the table and the boat is shipping untold tons of water at every dip. "You ought to have been with us in December, '14, when we nearly had our upper deck taken away. Then you might talk of a storm."

"Call this firing!" says the soldier, when a varied assortment of 5.9's and 8-inch are

dropping at irregular intervals in your immediate neighbourhood. "You ought to have been with us on June 2nd. Then the guns were just one continuous roar. This is nothing!" Only once have I known a soldier to admit that the Huns' guns were really troublesome. Even then he did not make the confession until our trenches were smashed up. "Never mind," he said, "we have given it to them twice as bad as they have given it to us."

The game over, we moved on to the front lines. The walk through the communicating trenches is always wearisome. You twist and double and take twenty minutes to cover a distance that you could cover in five minutes on the surface. When we had done half the journey we came to a bit of a wood. "It's four minutes if we go through this wood and sixteen minutes if we go round by the trenches," said my guide. "The Germans turn a machine-gun on here every night about this time, but we have five minutes to spare; let us rush it. If you hear a click, drop down like a streak of greased lightning and lie low." But the enemy was kind to us to-night, and did not start their evening performance before time. It was a wood of contrasts. The blackberries were ripening on the bushes—they seemed to ripen earlier in the salient than they do at home—and the birds were singing. Birds live in the hottest of the front, undisturbed by all the racket of war. There were shell holes in plenty, trees with their

trunks half torn, some trees broken down midway, some splintered and split with fantastic destruction, as though a genie of mischief had come along and worked with malicious impishness.

There was still sufficient daylight for one to take in the appearance of the front lines themselves. Here we had reached a place on a very low level, where trenches were impossible so that all we could have was a very substantial parapet of sandbags to protect us from the enemy fire. To-night, fortunately, was dry. On wet days the little stream that ran through our position rose, and the ground became one slithering, slipping slough. Here, in the first winter, our boys fought up to their middles in mud, and even now, with all our precautions and drainage and improvements in trench life, nothing could make this particular spot anything but a hell hole. There is some comfort and sense of security in a decent, well-drained trench. There is none behind a raised parapet, when you know that the enemy occupy all the hill positions around, and that you are playing the part of the rat in the pit.

Darkness came on. There were the rounds to be made, the password for the night to be given and minute instructions to be conveyed to every corporal's guard. There was no need of lights to show us the way. The German flares, steadily ascending in a semi-circle around, each made for a time its own immediate circle as bright as

daylight, while beyond that circle things seem strangely weird. The trench mortars had ceased their work, but the Huns were apparently fearing some attempt at attack on our part, for they maintained an unusually heavy rifle fire, constantly sweeping our parapets. All one had to do, however, was to obey the old adage, "Keep your heads down, Canadians," and one was as safe as in Piccadilly Circus or in Yonge Street.

"Here we are," said the captain, pointing to a little tunnel under one part of the parapet. "Go quietly, keep low and when the flares go up, put your faces down, so that they cannot see your flesh. White flesh stands out under the flare." We crawled on our hands and knees through the tunnel, and then we were in No Man's Land itself.

I had often studied No Man's Land from the trenches. The desolate strip between our lines and the German lines varies in width from fifteen yards to half a mile. A few hours before I had been at one spot on our front where the Germans were fifteen yards away. We occupied one small side of a crater; they occupied the other. On our side the bombers stood always ready, waiting for the first sound of real activity to turn the other side into a shambles. Doubtless over the way *Messieurs les Boches* waited in similar fashion for us.

This space is blocked on either side by great masses of wire entanglements, with lanes running through them—carefully guarded lanes,

safe for our own men, but with a machine-gun waiting for the first of the enemy who showed his nose. The lush weeds grow coarsely on a soil enriched by the blood of many brave men. Often enough on the hotter parts of the line those who have fallen and died have to lie unburied in some shell hole for days, sometimes weeks, until their comrades can go to them. No Man's Land! the scene of thousands of desperate hopes, of thousands of brave raids and solitary heroisms, the field, too often the grave, of the Empire's best!

Creeping along the narrow gully, it took an effort of imagination to realise where one was. It was pitch dark. Our way was obstructed by wires. We had to move with caution, for noise would have brought a machine-gun on us, and we had now no parapet to keep the bullets back. There came a flare. Down went our heads, and when the light of the flare had died away the darkness seemed all the more intense. Flare followed flare, and while the flares continued there was nothing to be done but to lie absolutely still.

Soon we reached the observation post, where three or four of our men were lying low, listening intently for any sound of enemy approach. The captain gave some whispered instructions to the corporal and his men. "You boys quite understand," he said, "that if the Germans come along to-night you are not to stay here and fight them. All you have to do is to give

the alarm and hurry back behind the parapet. You're not to be fools and throw yourselves away for nothing. Now do not forget. That is an order. If you see them coming, fall back as quickly as ever you can."

Beyond the observation post our men were testing the wires and were patrolling close to the German lines. Some Germans, we knew, were probably patrolling close to us. "Lie low. Keep your ears open. Don't make any sound."

One listened to the noises. Chief among these was the rifle fire, bullets from near-to-hand rifles, sounding like the crack of a whip overhead, bullets from distant rifles having a distant ping. Then came the kick of the machine-guns that broke out with their devil's tattoo every few minutes, and the crack of the flare as it was fired from its clumsy pistol into the heavens. Now an alarm arose a little further down the line. A stupid German sentry had been startled by something. The machine-guns burst out and the rifle fire grew heavy, only to die away in a few minutes.

Sometimes, even in this wild night shooting, the bullets find their billets. Twice that night, after we returned behind the parapets, men came to report casualties. Our corporal in No Man's Land had been caught by a bullet in the stomach. A private behind the parapet, raising his head for a moment, had been struck down by a bullet in the eye.

Soon after daylight the major came on his round. I was to join him. "You ought to see No Man's Land in day time," he said, and so we went into it again. It was very different now. The rifle firing had ceased, and there was comparative quiet. The surroundings that had seemed so gloomy and mysterious in the darkness looked now nothing but a bit of coarse and forsaken country-side with a lot of barbed wire spread over it. When we were a little way out I turned to note the front of our own trenches. I knew them well from behind; I did not recognise them from the front, for the earth over the sandbags had been covered during the summer by a growth of grass. Branches of trees and bushes—bare bushes, with every leaf torn off by shell fragments—made the illusion complete. I seemed to be looking at a slightly rising country ridge.

We moved along No Man's Land in another direction. We could hear the sound of voices, German soldiers talking in their trenches over their morning meal. And then there came a harsher, harder, louder note. It was one of our own guns. The morning's artillery fire had opened. The new day's work had begun!

PART IV.

MEN AND THINGS

1. INTELLIGENCE

EARLY in the war I wrote on one occasion that the old-fashioned spy, beloved by novelists, was almost as much out of date as is the hansom-cab or the coach-and-four. "He is still used sometimes by both sides," I stated, "but in trench warfare the work formerly done by the spy is now accomplished by a process of minute observation and by intelligent deduction."

Shortly after writing this I was travelling one day from one point of the line to another when, at every turn, I found myself held up by guards and sentries, who scrutinised and examined me —and I noticed also everyone else—with the utmost care. After this had happened four or five times I met a man in authority whom I knew, and asked him what was the matter. "A German officer has got behind our lines," he said, "evidently got down at night time on a plane. He talks English perfectly and is dressed in khaki. Sentries have reported a strange officer going along parts of the line from several points. We want to catch him." Here, I had to admit, was a spy of the old-fashioned type, even if he did use an aeroplane.

Shortly after that I chanced to wander into a quarter—I cannot locate it more particularly—where spies and anti-espionage had come right up against one another. I then discovered that the old-fashioned spy system is maintained fully and that the actual doings of some of these spies would make any romantic imaginings of Mr. Phillips Oppenheim or his followers seem tame.

But it is true that, in addition to the old-time spy work, both sides have established an elaborate system of obtaining knowledge on the front lines. The Germans and ourselves, each of us, use very much the same methods.

They call the work intelligence nowadays. Each army corps has its own intelligence staff, housed usually in a separate set of temporary buildings, which could be burned up with all their contents in a few minutes if necessary. Here one notes an army of clerks at work. Typewriters rattle at full speed all day long; the mimeograph is kept busy producing duplicates of circulars and reports. Newspapers, including enemy papers, pour in. The post is a heavy one; the telephone is ever ringing, and the telegraph clerk has little rest. Looking at the outside rooms one might imagine oneself for the time, were it not for the khaki of the clerks, in a busy city office. Here the problem of obtaining news of the enemy's movements is solved. How?

In trench warfare on the western front there are certain things that must be known if we are not always to be at the mercy of the

enemy. Who are the troops opposing us at each particular point? What is their character? What is the record of their commanders? What guns have they? Where are these guns placed? Are they preparing new blows against us? How far back do their entrenchments go? Are they digging fresh mines against us? On the answers to these questions depends our success in defending ourselves against the enemy or in starting attacks on him.

The first means used is observation from above, from stationary "sausage" balloons and from aeroplanes. The observers in the "sausage" balloons, which are planted all around our lines, have probably the least enviable task of any men in the service. I am not thinking here of their liability to attack from enemy aircraft; that is comparatively a minor ill. But *la saucisse* is the most uncomfortable vantage spot on earth. As it tugs at its ropes it oscillates in a slow, twisting movement which upsets even those who can stand the Bay of Biscay or the Black Sea without a tremor.

From the "sausage" balloon a general watch on the enemy lines can be made and considerable movements in any way reported. The aeroplane observers who go over the enemy lines bring back what is even more valuable than personal reports, exact photographs which record every detail of the enemy's trenches. Photography from the sky has been brought to amazing perfection.

I have known cases where the photographer has gone up in the afternoon and has come back, say at four o'clock, with his exposed plates. They have been at once developed, dried and prints taken as rapidly as in a newspaper office on a rush night. Experts have set to work studying them and comparing them with previous photographs. Developments so minute that they would escape the ordinary eye, have been noticed, a slight difference in shading here, signs pointing to a rise in the ground there, and the like. The location of these places has been fixed and then telephoned to the batteries, and within less than an hour after the airman has come down our batteries have been pouring their fire on this special spot. And then the airmen have gone up again to take further photographs of the destruction that has been wrought.

Here we come to the fine art of disguise. It is easy enough to paint an outstanding object in such a way that it cannot be told from its surroundings when looked at from above, but you cannot paint its shadow. Time after time in the early days the most careful concealment of a man or of some outstanding object like a gun was given away to the enemy by the shadow which was shown up on the photographs. Hence plans had to be devised to disguise the shadow. It sounded impossible, but it was done and is done to-day.

From the photographs we obtain the general lay of the enemy's positions. This observation

is supplemented by a minute watch kept by picked men in every battalion on the front lines upon the trenches opposite to them. These men, hidden away in some spot from which they can overlook the Germans, lie hour after hour, their eyes glued to powerful prismatics. They carry the process of minute observation to the extreme. Very small details sometimes give away very big secrets. Minute signs sometimes give away the positions of even the most carefully concealed guns. Every night observers send their reports in to their commander, reports that would seem absurd to any outsider, telling, as they do, the things which most of us would not think worth a moment's notice. After the commander has studied them they go to the Intelligence Department, where they are fitted in with other observations from the same spot.

The enemy themselves give away information about their guns. The gun positions are, of course, carefully screened over in such a way that our aeroplanes shall not observe them. But every shell that comes into our lines tells something of the gun that fired it. As far as possible the nature of every shell is noted, and the experts gloat over a new specimen of an unknown kind of shell as Darwin would have gloated over an ape man. And so, by studying the shell noses and fragments and the "duds," the intelligence officers can form a very good idea of what the batteries are against them and where they are. They soon know when one gun is moved day by

day, from position to position, to make us believe that the enemy have several of the same type. When news comes from one point of our line that the great 10-inch guns have ceased to worry them, and three days afterwards news comes from a different point of the line a little way down that a fresh battery of 10-inch guns has opened out on it, it is a very natural deduction that the Huns have moved the guns from one point to the other. Then it is for the trained brain of the men behind the army to decide why the guns are moved. The very removal of the guns may be the first clue to the discovery of a big new departure on the part of the enemy.

Above all we must find out who the men are against us. The infantry on the opposite lines are concealed in their trenches. One may live for a month in one particular section and scarcely obtain a glimpse of a single German, try as you will. Sometimes the enemy obligingly make a raid and lose a number of men. Their caps, their papers, and their note-books, give us very full information. The German soldier loves to keep a diary. Every bit of written matter like this is preserved and collated.

In war one starts out with the almost unconscious assumption that we, on our side, are much cleverer and much braver than the enemy. One possibly admits, unwillingly, that the enemy may have certain temporary advantages in certain ways. They may, for example, contrive to get one superior type of gun. But that is an

accident. Essentially, one is convinced, they are really very inferior folk. Gradually the truth becomes forced on you that the enemy regard you in just the same way. They have behind their lines men of keen brain, ready of resource, full of device, who are trying to trick you.

One of the German intelligence tricks was, however, these very diaries and letters. The soldiers along the front lines were—and possibly still are—given numbers of bogus letters to carry with them which contained all kinds of false information, very cleverly written, very subtly disguised. Some of the extraordinary tales of German internal conditions which circulated throughout Allied countries early in the war were obtained by just such means. Here was the letter found on the body of the dead soldier from his old mother in a Thuringian village, a letter with signs of the very tears on it which she had dropped when writing to her son, a letter full of simple piety, of homely affection, of motherly sentiments. Doubt it! It would have seemed as absurd as to doubt the sincerity of a mother's talk when she is crooning to the baby on her knee. And yet this very letter, and many a one like it, were written not by the poor old mother, but by patient and diligent young Germans, probably spectacled, probably chuckling as they wrote. They were plants. Can't you imagine the young fellow calling his comrade to his side, breaking into a

roar of laughter as he invents some unusually pathetic bit.

* * * *

Where the enemy will not obligingly raid us it is often necessary for us to raid them and to capture some prisoners. All sorts of tricks are done by both sides to find who are up against them. For example, when the First Canadian Division went to the front the Germans could not discover for a time where they were stationed. So one night along a big section of the German front English-speaking Germans shouted out taunts to the Canadians across No Man's Land. "Come out and fight us, you blessed Canadians. Why do you hide away in your trenches? We will send you back to Canada soon." And so forth. The trick succeeded. The Canadians, in the particular spot where they were placed, hearing these German cries and taunts, replied in kind, slanging the Germans. They gave the enemy the information they required.

Why trouble to ascertain what are the particular regiments opposed to you? For many reasons. In our own army each section has its own methods of fighting. So it is with the enemy. The Germans know the record of the West Kents or the 48th Highlanders of Toronto as well as we do; maybe better. They probably have a card index for each of our colonels, as they certainly have a *dossier* for our generals. The Bavarian has different methods to the

Saxon, and the regiment from Hanover will not always do the things that the men from Berlin will sink to. When we discover that regiments yesterday at Verdun are now brought against us, the fact has great significance for both the French at Verdun and ourselves.

. Trickery goes on all the time. We do it. They do it. The sniper has the most ingenious devices to deceive the enemy as to his position. The brigadier evolves guile to hide his intentions. Pretences, traps and deceits are a necessary part of war. And the Canadian has not the reputation of being backward in baiting sharp traps to catch the enemy or in devising smart tricks to confuse him.

It might be thought that the prisoners would be the most valuable source of information of any. I doubt if they are. There are two types of prisoners. There is, first, the prisoner who, after a momentary hesitation, talks freely about what his army is doing and gives away all kinds of information. He is really valuable to us. It can be safely assumed that all that he says is lies and that he is carefully trying to deceive us. But intelligence officers are skilled in dealing with liars, and the thing the liar leaves out often reveals what we want to know. The average prisoner—particularly the average officer—says little or nothing. No one thinks the worse of him for that.

In the temporary buildings behind the lines all the information gathered from every source pours

in. Here the essential details are classified. Here shrewd brains deduct the vital truths. These are promptly circulated throughout the army corps on an established system. Each army corps exchanges information with others, and I presume that behind the army corps there is another central organisation which collates and reviews the whole.

The Canadian Army Corps had the very good fortune to start right on the intelligence game. A young electrical engineer from Toronto, Mitchell by name, was appointed to the First Expeditionary Force as its chief intelligence officer. He proved a genius at this particular work. On the way across the Atlantic and at Salisbury Plain he had his hands full in weeding out German agents or men with German sympathies who had smuggled themselves into the Canadian Corps. Men practised in scouting and trapping added their woodcraft and wisdom to the common fund of knowledge, and when the First Division grew into an army corps, Mitchell, now a colonel, remained head of its intelligence. In due time he was called from the army corps to still more responsible work on a wider scale on the general staff, but his system remained and was developed more and more. "I had no idea what intelligence work was until I saw what your men were doing," said one high Imperial officer very generously on one occasion.

The new-fashioned intelligence officer has brought science and modern business methods to his aid, and has reduced the art of learning what the enemy is doing to an exact business.

* * * *

You can see other aspects of the twin arts of intelligence and camouflage in the snipers' schools at the back of the front.

There are schools of many kinds immediately behind the front lines. There are officers' schools where promoted non-coms. and green hands from home are given forced feeding in knowledge which surpasses any cramming for examinations known to me. This forced feeding is, moreover, very good. The first task the teachers set themselves is to instil in the cadet a sense of responsibility. He is taught the dignity of his new office. His initiative is encouraged. He is taught how to rule, and the one lesson ground into him from the beginning to the end is that his own likings, his own ease, his own safety must be at all times subordinate to the good of his men. He is to be a leader.

At the snipers' school, officers and men are taught the tricks of woodcraft and the arts of concealment. Naturally none but good shots come to these schools. At the beginning of the war the Hun had nearly all his own way in sniping. To-day we beat him at his own game. I wish it were possible to tell fully the romance of the British sniper. His tricks and guile, all

legitimate artifices of war, would make the tales of Fenimore Cooper, even, seem mild.

"Look at this sniperscope," said the veteran commander. "Isn't it a beauty! You notice that it was made in Birmingham. Here's another. It's a Gœrtz. I think we have caught the Boche up now, don't you?" And when I compared the two it seemed to me that we had.

And then the commandant let himself go. "I wonder if you have any idea," he exclaimed, "how many of our best men were killed in cold blood because England let Germany take the optical trade out of her hands. Up to the beginning of the war all sniperscopes were made in Germany. The Huns had carefully acquired the entire trade in their manufacture, driving out every one else. They had big stocks of sniperscopes. We had practically none, and could not procure any. The South African war had shown us the gain from telescopic sights on rifles for expert marksmen, but we had not taken advantage of the lesson.

"In the autumn of 1914 German snipers were able to do a great deal of harm. They would lie concealed in trees or on straw stacks, often with sufficient food for a week or two, and as our armies advanced, they, lying in the rear, would pick out our officers at their leisure and shoot them down. Then we woke up. The army was tooth-combed to find opticians, and all who were found were sent home. A new optical industry was begun, and this sniperscope shows the

result. We have caught the Germans up to-day. I think we have gone a bit beyond them, and our snipers are doing as good work as even the expert German foresters did. But weren't we blessed fools ever to let the trade be lost to us!"

2. HOW THE AMERICANS HELPED CANADA

It was to be expected that at the outbreak of the war a certain number of Americans should join our ranks. In Southern Alberta there are large numbers of American farmers. Throughout the cities of the West many Americans have settled for business purposes. A Canadian-born man sat in President Wilson's Cabinet; an American-born man edited a leading Canadian newspaper; Canada's High Commissioner in London was born in Vermont. But the response exceeded expectations. Thousands of Americans living in Canada volunteered. Thousands of others, American-born Canadians and British many of whom had taken out American citizenship, flocked across the border to join up.

Officers in the United States Army resigned their commissions and enlisted in the ranks of the Expeditionary Force as privates. Ranch-owners, cow-punchers, quiet lads from the Maine and adventurers from the Texan border, engineers galore, schoolmasters and bankers, sailors and lumber-jacks, flocked to Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver.

Some of the Americans clamoured to have a legion of their own. After a time Sir Sam

Hughes gave his consent and an American Legion was raised. Several battalions were recruited. Bills were posted over the country, like this:—

AMERICAN LEGION.

IF You believe in fair play,
You really love liberty,
You want to fight for right,
You are a real man,

COME OVERSEAS WITH US.

But, in the end, the idea of a separate American legion was abandoned, and recruits were scattered among other battalions. The crack corps of Canadian regulars had, in the winter of 1916, 250 of them in its ranks, and it wanted more.

A certain number of American recruits were drawn, of course, by love of adventure, but many of them came with very serious purpose. They recognised that this was to be a battle for world liberty, and they soon proved their soldierly qualities. I asked the commander of the famous battalion which had earned great glory, although it had only been at the front a few months, for some details about the Americans under him. "We had scores of them," said he, "but you will not find them here. You will find their graves on the Somme."

The United States Army and Navy officers who joined the Canadians have made a record of their own. Take, for example, Major Houghton,

of a machine-gun battery. Houghton was nearly four years in the United States Navy, and wears to-day on his uniform the ribbons of the West Indian and San Juan campaigns, alongside of his more recently-gained British Military Cross. "The United States Navy knew that if it had not been for Britain, Germany would have taken sides with Spain in the Spanish War," he said, when I asked him why he joined. "This was not the only dirty trick Germany tried to play us. I took the opportunity of paying off old scores."

Houghton telegraphed to a friend to join him. "Sure, which side?" came the quick reply. There was no question of his side. Being a machine-gun expert, he was welcomed and given his commission. He soon came to the front. When I last saw him he had taken part in all the big fighting of the past two years, except when he was recovering from a wound. The share the machine gunners take in a fight can be judged from their name, the "Suicide Club." He received his Military Cross, not for one specially prominent act, but for continuous gallantry, initiative and dash.

Houghton once wrote a famous letter to a friend in America, giving his real opinion of the Hun. It was the kind of letter that would scorch the hide off an alligator. His friend published it, and as a result the major received hundreds of letters from pro-Germans threatening him. "I know who you are," one angry correspondent wrote. "I will hunt you down

and kill you when you come back, if it takes ten years." "It looks as though I'm safer in the trenches," Houghton chuckled.

Ask any Canadian soldier about the Americans in the ranks, and the chances are that he will mention two names, Major Stewart and Captain Stanley Woods, both from the United States Army, and both killed about the same time in the great fight of June, 1916.

Stanley Woods came from a well-known family in Kansas City, and was on the staff of General Leonard Wood. His father fought for the North and his uncle for the South in the Civil War. He resigned his United States commission, against the urgent representations of old army friends, and enlisted at Toronto as a private. He was anxious to get to the front, and so he unhesitatingly tackled the Minister of Militia himself. Sam Hughes finally turned on him, gave him the rough side of his tongue, and told him that he was worrying him more than half a dozen battalions put together. "But I like you," he wound up, "and you can go." It was Lieutenant Woods who soon after joined the cavalry at Canterbury, England.

He came to the Canadians at the front early in the summer of 1915. He was wounded soon after, hurried back as soon as possible, and was killed in the following June. In those few months he earned a reputation which still makes old comrades' voices tremble as they talk of "old Woody." He was, to start with, a

first-class soldier, whose men would follow him anywhere. "He was the most popular officer in the army," says one. "We thought the world and all of him," says another. He was a champion baseball player. His spirits were inexhaustible, and the worse the time, the merrier he was. "I'm cold and scared. I want to die happy. Send me something to drink," was a typical note to a chum when he was out in the front lines.

He always said that if he had to be killed, he wanted to die leading his men in a charge. He had his wish. When, in June, 1916, the Germans, by a tremendous, sudden attack, succeeded in taking the line of Mount Sorrel, dominating Ypres, his division was called upon to recover it. He commanded his company in the great charge and reached the last ridge. Then a shell caught him.

Major Stewart, who ranked in the army's esteem with Woods, was for twelve years in the United States cavalry. He was, by universal admission, one of the finest cavalry officers in the army, and an ideal soldier, a father to his subs. and men, and hungry to be in the front of the fighting line.

On the day of the same fight Stewart learned that one battalion close to his own was short of officers. He asked to join it, and was granted permission, with the stipulation that he must remain in the front trenches and not go forward.

Everyone knew that few might return from that coming charge. When the word came to go over the top, Stewart, despite the orders, was first out of the trench. He was smoking a cigar, apparently unconscious of the tremendous German machine gun and shell fire. "Come on, boys," he called. He had not gone far when a bullet caught him in the leg. He was carried back to the trench, and while his wound was being dressed, a shell fell between his legs and exploded. They buried him in the big cemetery facing the old railway line in the Ypres salient, the final home of many brave men.

Lieutenant Gibson, formerly captain in the United States Army, was, at the time the war began, a broker at Prince Rupert. Although well beyond the usual military age, he enlisted as a private. He won his commission by his fighting qualities. His ancestors were the fighting MacDonalds. His men recall how, at that same Mount Sorrel charge, he waved his hand, shouting, "Come on, boys. Come on. This is a great day for Canada!" He fell wounded, still urging them on. Not that they needed urging. The hill was again in their hands.

Gibson is the only man in the Canadian Army entitled to wear a beard, special permission having been given him on account of a wound in his neck.

Among old American soldiers in the ranks, Sergeant W. MacInnes comes first. He is evidence of the American Army friendship for

Britain. When the war broke out his commanding officer in the United States Artillery, himself an old British gunner, helped him to get his discharge. In the battle of Ypres, in April, 1915, when the Canadians saved the Allied lines, at tremendous cost to themselves, MacInnes, then a bombardier, was one of a gun crew in a very hot corner. All the officers, all the sergeants and all the corporals were knocked out by the ceaseless Hun fire. Then MacInnes, bombardier —the next rank to a private—took command, held his men together, and helped to steady the whole line. He was mentioned in despatches. General Joffre himself pinned the *Croix de Guerre,* the most coveted of all French Army decorations, to his breast and kissed him on both cheeks.

Sergeant Fuller, of the United States Coast Artillery, won the Military Medal for gallantry at St. Julien. Lieutenant Gret, formerly a sergeant in the United States Engineers, won his commission from the ranks.

I asked a hard-bitten Westerner what had induced him to join the British ranks. "I always hated 'Greasers' (Mexicans) and Huns," he replied. "I can't kill 'Greasers' or I'd be hanged. But I jumped at the chance of killing Huns, and I'm right on the job." I asked a second, a quiet-spoken Maine boy, who has won the Military Medal for gallantry on the field. "I thought from the first that this was a fight in which all ought to take part," he said, "and

so I came." This was, of course, long before America came into the war.

The second was the prevailing type. They thought out the matter, came to a decision, and joined up for neither fun, frolic nor adventure. Often enough, they coldly hate and despise the German, and when they let themselves go, their eloquence about the Hun leaves their less nimble-tongued neighbours admiringly envious. "Gee, if I could talk like that!" said one Alberta boy, after an ex-Texan cowboy had spoken his mind for five minutes on the Hun as he really is. He never used the same adjective twice, and each adjective was like an added drop of vitriol.

They are of varied types. There is, for instance, Lieutenant Larrabbee, a West Pointer, who broke his course to join as a private. He earned the D.C.M. for special gallantry in rescuing wounded, and had his commission soon after. Shepherdson, a noted sniper in one infantry battalion was, in the old days, a very well-known Western cow-puncher; W. H. Harton, now a Canadian rifleman, was, when a member of the National Guard of New York, a champion pistol shot, and one of the competitors for the Elcho Shield. He was wounded at Zillebeke. Williams, of Indiana, was a captain in his State Militia. He joined the French Foreign Legion, and won the *Médaille Militaire*. Then he was transferred to the Canadians, was wounded and decorated with the British Military Medal. The story of Rogers, the

American boy who, acting as a runner, was wounded and won the Military Medal on the Somme, and then was claimed back by the American authorities, is well known. He didn't want to leave, and officers and men in his old regiment have nothing but good to say of him.

Here is a record of a different kind, and, greatly as it is to the credit of the man, I do not feel that I ought to give his name. A brilliant young officer in the United States Army resigned, and was given a commission with the Canadians. He occasionally drank too much, and, as a result, was advised to resign. He did so, but immediately re-enlisted as a private. "If I can't keep sober as an officer, I'll have to when in the ranks," he said.

He was sent to the front, where he soon made a fresh record, this time for gallantry. He was attached to the machine-gun corps, and won promotion to sergeant and the Military Medal. After one heavy fight, in which he stood out as a born leader, he was offered another commission, which he accepted. His old weakness had been conquered. When there's a bit of daring X. is the man for it. Everyone admires and likes him. "I'd rather have a man who'd tripped up, and recovered, than one who hadn't enough blood in his veins to feel the force of temptation," said one experienced general to me. "I've no use for the second kind."

Sergeant Martin is another American who won a D.C.M. At the fight for Observatory

Ridge there was a great deal of wire obstructing our advance. The whole front was swept by shell fire, machine-guns and snipers. It seemed certain death to go out. Martin crept from our trenches in broad daylight, stealthily approached the German wires, cut quite a quantity, and returned. Incidentally, he was wounded. "He showed a very fine example as a soldier," say his superiors.

Private G. Sale, another young American, won a Military Medal in the same advance. Although wounded, he insisted on going back into the firing line, as soon as his wounds were dressed, carrying a load of grenades with him. He was then wounded a second time. Lieutenant MacFarlane, from the Middle West, was machine-gun officer for a battalion of Pioneers. He had earned his promotion from the ranks. He died at Maple Copse.

The battle of the Somme brought several Americans to the fore. A lad from a country town in Maine, Corporal Metcalf, who had been through much fighting and was several times recommended for gallantry, won his Military Medal for a deed of quiet courage. Metcalf's colonel told me the story as we were sitting one February afternoon in a wonderful cellar dug-out on the Western front. The chorus was supplied by the "whoof" of our eighteen pounders as they burst in the enemy lines, and the crash of the "Minnies" as they burst outside.

One afternoon during the heaviest fighting on the Somme, the Germans were making a barrage on our front. A man hurried into the battalion dug-out to say that one of the battalion was lying outside the trenches in a very exposed position, with his leg shattered. He was bleeding heavily, and if anything was to be done it must be done quickly.

"Can anyone put on a bandage?" the colonel demanded.

"I can, in a way, sir," Metcalf replied, and, grabbing the roll, he rushed out.

The whole place was humming and roaring with the noise of shells. The machine-guns were beating their devil's tattoo. The colonel showed him the way through. "Go, and do your best." Metcalf found his man, bound up his wound, and, since it was impossible to move him, sat by him till he died. He well earned his medal, and, if I am not mistaken, will earn more yet.

Around the district in Maine from which Metcalf comes, a number of lads, his neighbours and friends, are coming too. They want to share in the glory of the war. Several of them had already crossed the border and enlisted before America joined in. A young telephonist, D. A. Keeble, from North Dakota, attached to a section of the Canadian Field Artillery, did some very gallant work. His duties took him often enough through heavy shelling, mending wires. At Courcelette, one of our planes was shot down a little way from him. Now, as a rule,

immediately a plane falls the enemy artillery concentrates on that point, and prudent mer stay away. Keeble ran up to it, cut away the fuselage to enable the airman to escape, and then calmly took out the two wicker seats and carried them off as trophies. He had barely got off before enemy shells rained down all around the plane.

Major John Lewis, editor of the Montreal *Star,* was an American who became a British subject before the war. Professional soldiers who take mere deeds of courage for granted, are loud in praise of his conduct in the attack on Regina Trench, on October 21st, 1916. His party of three officers and twenty-six men overran Desire Trench and reached Grandcourt Trench. Here they maintained themselves all day against attack after attack by strong bombing parties. Major Lewis sent back, telling his exact position, and saying that they could stay there. A box barrage was put around them, and then, while defending themselves against companies of Germans in front, they passed back 200 German prisoners they had captured. Unfortunately, Lewis himself was killed just as he started to come back. But he had earned a permanent place among Canada's heroes.

In the costly fight of May 8th, 1915, a regiment which has, from the first, had a number of Americans in its ranks, occupied a long line of shallow trenches, was exposed to hours of merciless fire, and was repeatedly charged by the finest

troops of the German Army. Sergeant Pemberton, of Philadelphia, did well. The battalion was losing very heavily. Every officer save two or three was killed or wounded. Supplies of ammunition were almost exhausted; there was no artillery behind and reserves had not yet arrived. Pemberton helped several wounded officers out of the firing line, including the founder of the corps. Then he took command of his own section in the trench, and, in the hour when heroes might have faltered, stood fast until the German fury of attack had exhausted itself and the baffled enemy retired. J. C. Richardson, of Des Moines, was wounded in the same attack. When he recovered, he was given a commission, and afterwards transferred to the Flying Corps. Lieutenant Birdseye, an American college boy, who quitted classes for soldiering when the war broke out, early earned the coveted Distinguished Conduct Medal. He entered the army as a private, but won his decoration and officership by going over the parapet during very heavy fighting and bringing in wounded men.

The big raid of December 2nd, 1916, brought the Military Cross to a Michigan boy, Lieutenant McCormack. Previous attempts had been made to raid one part of the German lines and had failed. Then a battalion, to which McCormack was attached, volunteered to make another attempt. McCormack was reconnoitring officer. His business was to investigate No Man's Land, to find a way in and to work the lines for the

others. The raiders were in three parties. Those to the right and to the left reached the German trenches after heavy fighting. They rushed and captured a machine-gun just as it was about to open out on them. They held either end of a considerable stretch of trench, and a party of Germans in it could neither advance nor retire.

Meanwhile the centre party was held up by very strong wire entanglements, which could not be broken through. The officer gave the word, and his men, stretching out in front of the wire, threw their bombs right along the line of cooped-up Germans. Then the side parties rushed in. The trench was heaped with dead men. A hundred Germans had been blown to pieces. McCormack's work that night won him the Military Cross.

Lance-Corporal Worthington was a civil engineer from Indiana. He came from Vera Cruz to join the Canadians. On January 5th the Germans tried to raid one of our advanced posts. There was very heavy shell fire, and the little garrison was shaken by it. Just then Worthington and a Lieutenant Griffiths arrived. They rallied the men. Worthington took a gun, and when the Germans tried to storm them they were swept back. Worthington received a Military Medal for his conduct that day.

"I tell you, these American soldiers are all right," said one Canadian commander to me with tremendous emphasis. "They are just as good fighting men as ever you want to see."

3. WHAT THE SOLDIER THINKS

"It is an easy thing to describe the externals of war, the scenes on a battlefield, the tremors, the horrors, the exaltation of a fight. It is easy to describe the every-day life of the soldier, how he is trained, how he lives, how he is fed. But, when one comes to try to understand the mind of the fighting man, particularly of the Canadian fighting man, one's own kith and kin, one touches a much harder topic."

What does the soldier think of it all?

This is not so easy to discover. You can mix with soldiers for weeks as a casual visitor and never penetrate below the surface of their lives. The man in the ranks hides his deeper self from chance passers-by. It is not until you are out with him on stunts where death walks by your side, or when you are helping him with a wounded comrade, or when you have experienced with him one of the horrible incidents that are necessarily frequent in real fighting, that the real man comes out. Gradually you come to find the soldier as he is; you come to find his spirit one of determination, not exaltation; one of disgust with war, yet resolve to go through it; one of longing for home, yet willingness to put thoughts of home and children on one side for duty.

The soldier is tired of the war. He is tired of its hardships and its sufferings, of standing hour by hour in icy mud, feet deep, and living in dug-outs, of cold and wet, of being the target

of enemy shells, enemy snipers and enemy bombs. He wants the thing over. The stage of enthusiasm is past; the stage of dogged endurance has come. He knows the chances are that shell or bullet or bomb will get him before he is through. No man who has seen war at close range talks slightingly of the sufferings of the wounded.

But tired as he is of the war, he has no intention of quitting or slackening. He is on a nasty, disagreeable job. It has got to be done, and he is going to do it. But he will be mighty glad when it is done.

I remember the first day on which some veteran soldiers spoke their mind out to me on this matter. I was spending the night on an advanced portion of our line, where we had made an unsuccessful raid in the darkness. After our wounded were brought back I lay down in the dug-out for an hour or two, and my last impression before I went to sleep was of two tremendous shocks as two heavy shells from a long-distance German naval gun dropped outside. Although I did not know it at the time, one of these shells had killed two men a little way up the trench. A couple of hours later in the early dawn I got up, moved along the trench, and found three or four soldiers cleaning themselves outside their dug-out. The men who had been killed were their special chums. One of the men standing there on that chilly grey morning amid the broken earthworks, began to talk.

"If I were the Commander-in-Chief," he said, "I would take every fighting battalion out of the line for three months a year, take it right away, back to England if I could. Text-book authorities talk of soldiers improving by experience of war. Don't you believe it. The best soldier is the young fresh soldier. He goes out in a raid or a storming party without a thought. But when you have been in a dozen or a couple of dozen raids and advances, and when you have seen what happens you think a good deal. You know the risks you are taking. You get stale. I feel a bit stale now. Don't you misunderstand me. We are going through with it all right. We are going to give Heinie every particular kind of hell every time we get the chance. There are no sissies in this battalion. If there were we would soon boot 'em out. But we're tired. We have seen so much and done so much that a three months' rest would make twice the men of us."

After the soldier has been out a few months his mind turns back to home. He remembers the farm in Alberta, the house in Toronto, the ranch down South, and, above all, the home folk. Very many of our men are married, very many of them have children they have never seen. Time after time I have had the question put to me as two of us have been waiting somewhere together, "Are you married? Have you any family?" And then the soldier's hand would go to the inside pocket of his tunic and a little

leather case would come out. He would open it and show me the photo of wife and children. "The best wife a man ever had. Poor little woman! She is doing finely looking after everything now. What do you think of those kids? He's a pretty bright youngster, isn't he? That is my eldest boy now. The day I left Toronto he made up his mind that he wasn't going to cry when I went away. I could read him like a book. And he kept up like a man till just the last minute. He's a good plucked one, he is." And so on, and so forth. Wife and children! The old folks! And there come special days, such as Christmas, when thoughts of home come particularly strong.

You find this feeling reflected in nearly every one of the real soldier songs, songs and rhymes, I mean, written by the men themselves. Take the old familiar lay:—

"I want to go home,
I want to go home.
I don't want to be in Ypres any more,
Where the shells they do burst and the guns
they do roar.
I want to go home."

I could quote fifty soldier rhymes to much the same effect.

General Loomis, in his Christmas message to the Western Canadian Infantry Brigade in December, 1917, noted the same thing:—

"We remember, when we first came to France, the men usually sang on the march. But for some time back marches are mostly made in silence. We have listened to the metallic 'clack, clack' of our men marching in regular cadence on the *pavé* of the *grandes routes nationales;* to the 'crunch, crunch' of their feet on the metalled roads; to the soft 'tamp, tamp' on the clay lanes; to the 'suck, suck' on the sticky and slippery mud, and to their march in single file over shell holes and grassy tracks when on their way to the trenches. We have heard them go by in their thousands—and silent. Why is this? What are the men thinking about? Has their enthusiasm diminished? Is the spirit changed? No! The old spirit is with the men as strong as ever. Their faces in the sunlight, their shadowy forms in the moonlight, if you watch them, will tell you this. The swing of their bodies and the sound of their feet speak of confidence and determination.

"It is three years, over, since the First Canadian Contingent sailed away from Canada, and they now march silently over the roads and lanes of France and Flanders because their thoughts are of homes and loved ones far away. They know that fathers, mothers, wives, children and sweethearts are also thinking of them and working for them."

If, however, I were to convey the impression that the soldier's mind runs to gloom I would be wrong. He is serious, but his seriousness goes along with very high spirits and plenty of fun. You cannot have large bodies of young men living together in the open, in the best of good health, with plenty of food, with abundant exercise, and have sustained gloom. Youth would find joy in life in a coal mine. High spirits, practical jokes, endless chaff and good fellowship are to be found in the army. The young soldier will make a joke about anything. If he is wounded that is a joke—if joke can be had out of it. I have heard more laughter in an advanced dressing station when the doctor was busy than during the performance of a supposed humorous play in a London theatre. Maybe some of the laughter was started to prevent groans, but it was laughter all the same. Some of the hospital wards are among the most cheerful places to be found—that is, provided that you do not go during the morning hours, when the wounds are being dressed. Now read this letter from a young wounded officer. I found it by chance in his colonel's dug-out. There is not much gloom about this, is there?

> "I write this from a base hospital to let you know that I am still in the land of the living, and that while things are not as pleasant or as exciting as with the battalion, they are, at least, bearable.

"I had written you a very different note the other day when they promised here to send me to Blighty. The M.O. of our ward, a persistent optimist, likewise a Canadian, a good sport, and a University of Toronto man, looked at the x-ray photograph of my feet, and said he would ship me away on the next boat. But his O.C. *renegéd,* and I am to stay here.

"My official ailment is (should the M.O. be curious) a simple transverse fracture of the base of the fifth metatarsal bone of the left foot. I copy this from my card. Translated into English it is, I believe, a clean crack in the little toe, third instalment from the front.

"Means of locomotion is necessarily neither graceful, comfortable, nor speedy. Two alternatives—a bull-frog hop, or a septuagenarian crawl executed by canting the injured limb outwards till it hits the ground about 1½ feet from the other. The speed limit is 100 yards in two minutes and a half; the maximum distance without cursing my luck, 250 yards. This last is done clandestinely, without the doctor's knowledge.

"I fear the great war will wag merrily on without my active assistance for possibly a month or more yet. Meanwhile I trust that

the battalion is still in its wonted luck, and that you personally are enjoying all health and success."

At first men felt war to be a great adventure. It shut out everything else. But as weeks stretched into months and months into years other interests came back. The literary man went to his books again, the student found time for his studies. The man in the ranks looked beyond the routine of war and began to ask questions. He wanted to learn afresh why the war had begun. He wanted to think out for himself what was to happen to him and to his fellows when the war was over. After all, let the war last three, five, or even seven years, most of the young fellows who had served through it would find at the end of that time that war had been merely a great interlude, and that there was the routine of the prosaic life to be faced of the days of peace, in the professions, or on a farm, in office or in shop. And so they began to prepare.

People at home were surprised when soldiers sent them lists of books, and they found that what they were asking for was not so much novels or light magazines as text-books and histories, discussions of the real issues of the war, forecasts of the future and the like. The Y.M.C.A. discovered, after a time, that there were no lectures so well attended—even under shell fire—or so much in demand as those by big

thinkers, where vital issues were gone into by men able to discuss them with authority. At first one could not fit in the idea of the young fellow turning from the mud and blood of battle at Vimy or Passchendaele to settle down in his odd moments of leisure to complete his work for an examination or to read the books laid down in a university extension course. But, like it or no, we have had to fit it in because it is true.

The soldier thinks a lot about the contrast between his life and the life of the man who has not put on khaki. He feels that there is something rotten in the state of affairs which treats the man in uniform with great severity for the same offence which in the workman, engaged on vital state work, is met by a small fine. A young soldier goes into battle. He is appalled by his experiences, half buried in mud, his nerves shattered by the sight of comrades killed and smashed up around him, and worn out with long hours and exertion, and with the cold and mud. A second battle comes on a day or two afterwards. The young soldier lingers behind, whereupon he is shot for cowardice on the field. A workman in a Clydeside yard, who has none of the nerve-racking experiences of the soldier at the front, absents himself for days from doing his share in the building of a merchant vessel vitally needed to maintain the food supplies of England. He probably receives no more punishment than a few rough words from his foreman. Is this thing fair? I do not ask the question.

Soldiers ask it of me, and I am not able to answer them.

"I volunteered at the beginning of the war," said one young fellow. "My family are struggling along. I support my mother, and she can just make ends meet. My health smashed up at Gallipoli, and I will never be the same man again. Our next-door neighbour did not volunteer, but kept on working. All of his family are earning good money. They have refurnished their house and the eldest son has bought a motor bike. They have a new piano and a gramophone, and they have a wad of money put on one side as well. Now it seems to me there is something wrong somewhere. It isn't fair." It is not.

The soldier is not a fool. This may seem an elementary and unnecessary thing to say. I only say it because many people talk of him as though he was a fool, and as though he could be fooled by mere phrases. The soldier is a man of trained intelligence. He thinks over these things. He has not much respect for politicians. He has not much respect for the civilian who takes everything and gives nothing in this war. The people who imagine that the soldier, when the war is over, is going to be the prey of every agitator are wrong. The soldier is thinking the problems of this war and the problems of Government out for himself. The ultimate results of his thinking may come as a painful surprise to some.

I was a very long time with our boys before I found how strong a religious feeling exists among them. I do not mean the religious feeling that expresses itself in the stock phrases of the churches. These men are up against the most tremendous actualities life has ever known. Just as their training teaches them to plan their movements in advance far ahead, so their mind goes out to that which will almost certainly lie for many of them immediately beyond the advance. I am glad that one Canadian doctor, recently returned from two or three years at the front, spoke out about the army being a training school for character. It is true. The average soldier is a better man, a finer man, and a greater man than ever he was in his civilian days. The people who have their eyes solely on the occasional excesses of individual soldiers see things falsely and see them in wrong perspective. Knowing, as I do, the hardships and restraints of much of their life, I am not so surprised at the excesses of individual men when they obtain temporary freedom, but these excesses are very much the exception. The average soldier brings into his hours of liberty the same bigness, discipline and self-restraint that he shows on duty.

If you want to strike a really sympathetic note among any men in the ranks, talk to them of the folly of polishing brass buttons. It doesn't sound a very big matter, but it represents the private soldier's greatest grievance. "Pipeclay" we used to call it in the old days. "I'd like to

take the jinks and boobs who invented brass polish and drown them in a muddy shell hole," said one man to a group of sympathetic listeners. "There was Bill back from the trenches. His officer came round on parade and looked at him, 'The third button on your coat is not properly polished.' And he had him up for it. Do they think a man fights Fritz better because he polishes the third button of his coat properly. Ugh!" And the soldier spat contemptuously on the ground as he spoke. The man in the ranks often enough cannot understand the need of polishing brass buttons. He wants to slay me when I tell him that brass buttons symbolise discipline and that discipline is the soul of an army.

Smartness in dress is a sign of discipline. Of course things can go too far. There may be commanders who are too anxious about the polishing of brass buttons or the shine of the horses' steel chains; Tommy is quite certain there are.

The average soldier takes the war very seriously. Nothing excites his contempt more than the easy philosophy which paints the enemy as an incompetent coward, and which forecasts immediate, sweeping and final victory. He has read too much of this kind of thing. He calls it "dope," and dope it is. I once had this brought home to me by personal experience. Returning to London after a time at the front, I found that everyone seemed convinced that all

was over but the shouting. So I sat down and wrote for a popular Sunday paper a straightforward account of the real conditions. I showed what we were up against and why. When my article appeared in print—as much of that, that is, as was allowed to appear in print—people in London did not like it. "You spoiled my Sunday dinner," said one acquaintance at my club. But, returning to France two or three weeks later, I found more men came up to me to talk of that one particular article than had ever spoken to me about my work before. And the fighting men were all appreciative. "Glad you told them the truth," they said. "If they were out here for a day or two they wouldn't talk the silly rot they do."

The soldier in the early days regarded the fighting somewhat in the light of a game in which he was prepared to treat the other side in real sportsmanlike spirit. He was going to fight his enemy—fight him as hard as ever he could. He was going to beat him; he was sure of that; but when he had beaten him he was quite prepared to shake hands and make friends.

Then there came a change. The Germans themselves to-day look on the Canadians, and particularly some Canadian Highland battalions, as among the most implacable and remorseless of their foes. Why? The reason is that the feelings of our men towards the enemy were changed by the systematic unfairness of a number of German battalions.

I am not accusing all German soldiers of fighting unfairly. I believe that there are many among them who have endeavoured to play the game as we have tried to, particularly in the air service. But there has been enough of them employing the lowest tricks in battle that could be imagined.

Everything is fair in war, it is said. But everything is not fair. The German, for instance, who drops down among the wounded during our advance, waits until our men pass, and then snipes our officers under shelter of his own fallen comrades, is not playing the game. What is more, he is practically compelling us to use drastic measures against all men left on the field. It is not playing the game for a German to lie out in No Man's Land close to our trenches, to moan and cry and to utter broken words in English in order to make our men think that he is an Englishman, and to allow our men to creep out to rescue him and then try to shoot down his rescuers. Do you imagine that the company which has lost its officer by a trick like this is going to feel kindly towards any Germans? If you do, you do not know human nature.

Some months ago one battalion was particularly noted for the fury of its attacks on Germans. Every man in that battalion seemed inspired by a sense of personal wrong. There were various fantastic stories about what had made these men so savage. I stayed with the

battalion and asked its officers. They told me how, in the fighting that summer, the Red Cross men had gone out on some occasions to bind up wounded men in shell holes. The Germans watching them had waited till the Red Cross men got in the shell holes, and then had thrown bombs among them, killing Red Cross men and wounded. Now this is not fair.

Many battalions have grisly memories of horrors done to their men when wounded on the field. They do not talk publicly of them, but they know them. Every man has heard the stories. I am not talking of tales such as that one widely circulated early in the war of the crucifixion of a Canadian sergeant. I, for one, was never able to verify that tale. But there have been things done which have never been told in print and never will be told in print, which have sent a flame of hate over the hearts of scores of thousands of our men. Yet the men who swear vengeance loudest against Fritz will, after the fight, when they find a wounded German soldier lying in the field, or when they come across a miserable bunch of German prisoners moving behind the lines, find their hatred die down. "Poor devils!" they say. Steel in the fighting field, these men are too much of soldiers to take their revenge on a helpless enemy.

I find the soldier a mixture of varying qualities —love of home and love of battle, great military pride, yet hatred of military routine, remorse-

lessness in fighting, willingness to help his enemy when he has knocked him out.

But, above all, I find him a great big man. I do not criticise him; I admire him, clean and straight, big hearted and fine all the way through. He tells us of a new Empire in the years ahead, an Empire greater because of the strength and the example of our lads at the front, than any we have yet dared to imagine.

4. GONE WEST

In a corner of my desk there is a little bundle of letters, ever growing bigger, from parents and wives overseas, asking me if I can obtain news of their missing sons and husbands at the front. They are letters written in agony of soul. All one has been able to do in most cases has been to shatter the last vestige of hope that remained. I avoid, when I can, opening the drawer that contains them.

The heaviest blow of this war has fallen, not on the soldier who is killed, but on the parents, wives and children left behind. You have met the old father whose only son disappeared, and who is eating his heart out with anxiety because all that he can learn is that his boy is missing. "If I could only get some definite news," he cries. Alas! in most cases he never will. We all know the mother whose life has come to a sudden stop because her only boy is gone. What can we say to people such as these? To talk of courage, submission and patience to them sounds

the merest mockery, at least, until the first passion of grief has exhausted itself.

The waste of it! we cry. These men who have gone were the very pick of our nation, trained leaders of the rising generation. War gave the final touch to their great qualities. It taught them endurance, it tested their unselfishness, it developed their manhood to the full. These were the men fitted, if ever men were fitted, to create a new and greater Empire. The waste of it!

And yet is it wholly waste? Have all their great qualities really gone for nothing?

A father known to me, himself a world-famous man, lost his favourite son on the Western front. The boy died splendidly when going to the rescue of others. He had cut short a brilliant career to take up a commission. His friends had already, in the days before the war, detected the touch of genius in him, and not without cause.

A woman friend approached the father. "What a waste!" she said pitifully, "that all his genius should have been thrown away." The father turned on her fiercely. "Waste!" he said with great emphasis. "What do you mean by waste? If I believed that my son's life and sacrifice had been lost for nothing, I would go mad. Thank God, I know better than that! Do you think that all his bigness and all his goodness came to an end when a sniper's bullet struck him? No! No!! No!!! These things can't die."

There are times when death seems glorious even to the man who wants least to die. I

remember on one occasion being asked to go on patrol in a warship in a mine and submarine haunted area. "It's not likely they'll get us," said one naval officer before we started. "But if they do, can there be a more glorious death?"

He spoke simply, naturally, and as a matter of course. That is the spirit of the navy. That is the spirit of the army.

No soldier wants death. No soldier wants wounds. It is the hope and prayer of every man that he may come back, and come back whole to home and kin. But if this is not to be, "Can there be a more glorious death?"

A young soldier came one night to my rooms in London in great bitterness of spirit, and as we sat together over the fire he told me his troubles. "They are threatening to send me home," he said. "I'm a crock. A medical board has reported that I am not fit to go to the front. Fancy having come this far, and then being obliged to go back home overseas a failure, to have one's friends think of one as a man not fit to fight."

And then his voice rose a bit. "I shan't do it," he cried. "I will get across the Channel somehow. There is a big fight on. I'll sneak out and join my battalion and go over the top with them. Maybe I'll get killed. That would be a fine finish! But to go back home a failure —I can't do it. Wouldn't it be lucky," he talked on, "if I got knocked out leading my platoon? I don't know much about religion, but I'm sure

that no man could go into the other world better than when he is strung up to the best that is in him, as you must be when you are going forward under fire."

All along the line of the Western front one sees graves, sometimes solitary graves, sometimes little groups, sometimes vast cemeteries, with neat lines of wooden crosses—crosses, incidentally, largely made by German prisoners in England. British graves, French graves, German graves, lie close together. Most of the crosses have names, sometimes many names on them. Others have the simple inscription, "Sacred to the memory of an unknown British soldier," or "Here rest unknown French comrades."

Then we come to the German graves. "Hier ruht in Godd" (Here rests in God). We leave the inscriptions, the faded flowers, the laudations of our enemies untouched. May they do the same over the graves of our boys!

Yet for every grave that is marked, a score and more have no sign. In one valley known to me, close on 200,000 French and Germans are said to lie dead beneath the soil in lines and swathes and packed trenches. There are few crosses there as yet.

Some day, when fighting is over, we will go back and erect, outside Ypres, on the great ridges of Messines and Vimy, on the undulating lands of the Somme, and in the mud bogs of Belgium, splendid memorials to our lads to mark our

remembrance. But their memories need no such token to keep them green. Dead, their work lives. The very sacrifice of their lives is bringing a new era of liberty and justice to the whole world. We mourn for them, but even in mourning let us remember to rejoice and be proud. For if the grief is ours, the glory of great accomplishment is theirs. Youth, cut off in its prime, has accomplished more than most lives that have stretched out to three score and ten years of self-centred existence.

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